The Treatise Committee for Suzanne Martinez Villalpando certifies that this is the approved version of the following treatise:

Principals' Leadership *For* Learning: Formative Assessment Strategies in Every Classroom

Committee:

Rubén Olivaréz, Supervisor

Martha N. Ovando

Edwin Sharpe

Marvin Whiteley

Bret Champion

Principals' Leadership *For* Learning: Formative Assessment Strategies in Every Classroom

by

Suzanne Martinez Villalpando, B.A. English; M.Ed.

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Dedication

To God, through You all things are possible. To my parents, Ray Martinez and Camerina Torres Martinez, for giving me the faith, foundation, and lifelong support to achieve any goal. To my husband, Nick, whose selfless support and understanding have spanned nearly three decades and who I thank for encouraging my personal, professional, and spiritual growth. To my children, Nicholas and Bella, who continue to amaze me with their maturity, faith, and insight. Nicholas, you inspire me to be more like you each and every day. Your leadership and support for me during my studies have been instrumental. Bella, your wit and insight surpass all expectations and your faith allows for no limits. Finally, I dedicate this to my family. Thank you for shaping me through the years and reminding me of my true priorities.

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Principals' Leadership *For* Learning: Formative Assessment Strategies in *Every* Classroom

Suzanne Martinez Villalpando, Ed.D.

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Supervisor: Rubén D. Olivaréz

The purpose of this study was to explore how school leaders address *both* the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom, an initiative that is often implemented as a means of gathering the data needed to support the academic needs of all learners (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Heath & Heath, 2010; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2010). In order to determine school leadership considerations for addressing the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom, two research questions guided the study:

1. What do teachers perceive to be their technical and professional socialization needs experienced during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment and how are these met?
2. What are the school principals' perceptions of how they address the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment?

Using a grounded theory approach, this qualitative study examined the perceptions of both teachers and principals through a multi-site case study design (Miles

& Huberman, 1994). This design was chosen in order to gather insight regarding the perceptions and experiences of principals and teachers at three elementary campuses that have implemented student formative assessment in every classroom. The sites and participants for this study were purposefully selected. Data were collected through interviews and focus groups. In order to confirm emerging theoretical explanations, the researcher gathered additional data through a review of relevant documents, such as district and campus improvement plans.

The prominent technical needs identified by teachers in this study were the development of a campus-wide common terminology, participation in vertical teaming, and the maintenance of the support role of a campus instructional specialist. Furthermore, teacher participants identified their professional socialization needs as reassurance from the principal with new professional learning, a gradual pace of implementation for the student formative assessment initiatives, meaningful teacher-to-teacher interaction, open and transparent communication with the principal, and opportunities to participate in building cohesive grade-level teams. Principals perceived their technical supports as facilitating vertical teaming, providing a campus instructional specialist, embedding time for collaborative professional development, and setting clear expectations for implementation. Additionally, principals perceived their professional socialization supports for teachers as facilitating the building of cohesive grade-level teams, providing reassurance with new implementation, promoting open and transparent communication, promoting a gradual implementation pace and facilitating meaningful teacher-to-teacher interactions.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The role of public education in America has evolved over the last century from merely ensuring classroom access for all to requiring academic achievement for all (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Pink, 2005). Although public schools were originally required to educate all students, the objective was to prepare students to contribute to an agricultural economy. Given the homogenous composition of students and limited accountability for public school academic outcomes, basic instructional practices were largely unquestioned. Until recent decades, rote pedagogy was an acceptable means of preparing students for both the farming and industrial sectors. In contrast to these longstanding practices, the current technological advances of the Information Age require students to be equipped with the conceptual and higher order thinking skills needed to compete in a global economy. The onset of the Conceptual Age has necessitated a focus on preparing learners who are able to navigate complex concepts in order to remain competitive in both the current and rapidly evolving industries of the contemporary era (Pink, 2005).

In addition to societal demands, educational mandates from governmental entities have increased in recent decades, demanding higher levels of performance, achievement, and accountability for every child. Enacted in 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act required states, districts, and individual campuses to meet stringent achievement criteria for all student groups (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011). The increased accountability is due, in part, to a rapidly shifting student demography in American public schools, which includes growth in English Language Learners (ELLs) and economically

disadvantaged student populations (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2012a). Although society and its demands have changed, many outdated, rudimentary, and ineffective pedagogical foundations remain in classrooms today (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011). Considering the recent shifts in the economy, technology, and in the composition of students in American classrooms, school district leaders bear the responsibility of assessing and addressing the professional learning needs of teachers to ensure that they are equipped to provide instruction that will ensure the heightened student-performance outcomes needed to meet the demands of a changing world (Chappius & Chappius, 2008; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wayman, Lehr, Spring, & Lemke, 2011).

Both federal and state entities have established accountability mandates for public schools, requiring schools to document and accept responsibility for these outcomes (TEA, 2011). The advent of NCLB caused increased public scrutiny of testing outcomes (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011). In response to pressure for increased student outcomes, states countered criticism with more rigorous localized public school standards and heightened criteria for district and student results (TEA, 2012b). The evolution of content standards and achievement standards for all demographic groups and individuals compels educators to ensure find ways of meeting both the achievement expectations from outside entities while also meeting the various instructional needs of each student. As a consequence, modern-day teachers are faced with higher instructional delivery demands than those of the past. To ensure the individual success of all children, teachers must collect data and determine how to interpret and formatively assess each child's performance in a timely manner (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Chappius & Chappius, 2007; Wayman et al., 2011).

As a result of drastic demographic, accountability, and socioeconomic changes in American public schools, educators have turned to formative student assessment and the meticulous use of data, which have become vital tools in classrooms across the nation (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Chappius & Chappius, 2007; Pink, 2005; TEA, 2012a; Wayman et al., 2011). The proper use of formative assessment has been determined to be a keystone of academic change needed for modern-day student success. In addition to answering the urgent call to improve student outcomes, school leaders are also confronted with the challenge of changing both the cultural and pedagogical paradigms of schools (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011). In response to these demands, DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour (2005) advanced the idea that the campus culture created by establishing Professional Learning Communities (PLC) is the framework needed for effective data collaboration in order to produce the outcomes that will satisfy the increased expectations. While research supports the use of formative data as a tool to improve instruction with the goal of providing a quality 21st-century education while meeting or exceeding state and federal accountability measures, there is a lack of research into *how* school leaders implement and support effective formative assessment strategies in every classroom (Jimerson, 2011; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2010).

This chapter explores the challenges encountered by leaders during the implementation of student formative assessment. The statement of the problem and purpose of this study both address meeting the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers in the implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom. Research questions and an overview of methodology are presented with a definition of important terms. The limitations and delimitations are stated along with

assumptions and the significance of the study. Finally, a summary concludes the chapter.

Statement of the Problem

School district and campus leaders of the modern era are charged with the task of implementing effective, research-based instructional practices to improve student outcomes. Research supports the use of student formative assessment processes that are appropriate for the unique contexts of their campuses as a means of improving instruction and academic outcomes for students (Wiliam, 2011). Although literature on instructional best practices supports the need for effective use of student data, limited studies are available on how to actually lead a faculty through the paradigmatic changes in pedagogical practice and long-held instructional beliefs required to implement formative assessment processes (Jimerson, 2011; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2011). When implementing research-based instructional practices, such as formative assessment, school leaders must do so with a strong consideration for the contextual, administrative, and sociological needs of their organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008; DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Consequently, contemporary school leaders must find the balance between implementing research-based instructional practices and the vital considerations regarding political and organizational pressure. Based upon the increased educational demands, research suggests a necessary movement from the traditional "loosely coupled" educational leadership of the past to a tight adherence to research-based instructional delivery (Young, 2006, p. 522). Research suggests that the paradoxical need to implement effective formative assessment processes coupled with a lack of resources presents a challenge for principals to provide for both the technical and professional

socialization needs that teachers may face when implementing a drastic change in conceptual understandings and practice (Jimerson, 2012; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2011).

Delivering the administrative direction needed to attain high levels of student achievement by using formative data remains a relatively enigmatic and complex task (Jimerson, 2011; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2010). Teachers must expand their technical skills to ensure the effective use of data. Correspondingly, principals must have the leadership ability necessary to address the resultant socialization needs of their teachers, such as the potentially strong emotional response to change and innovation (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heath & Heath, 2010). Consequently, school leaders must consider how to simultaneously address both the technical knowledge and socialization needs of teachers caused by the implementation of campus-wide formative assessment of students (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heath & Heath, 2010). In order to support this demand, there is a need to explore how principals successfully address and support both the technical needs and the professional socialization needs of teachers during the implementation of student formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heath & Heath, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

Educational leaders are confronted with the need to transform practice to prepare 21st-century students for the modern era (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Pink, 2005; Yell & Box, 2008). As economic, societal, and accountability demands prompt changes in instructional delivery and leadership, research supports the effective use of data and teamwork in every classroom (Copland, 2003). In growing numbers, school

leaders opt to implement campus and district assessment initiatives, often in the absence of a model or prior experience as a teacher or administrator. Black and Wiliam (1998) added,

> Most of the teachers … were caught in conflicts among belief systems. … The point of friction among these conflicts was assessment, which was associated with very powerful feelings of being overwhelmed, and of insecurity, guilt, frustration, and anger. … This study suggests that assessment, as it occurs in schools, is far from merely a technical problem. Rather, it is deeply social and personal. (p. 147)

With the need to consider both capacity and emotional responses of teachers, the purpose of this study was to explore how school principals addressed *both* the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom to provide for the academic achievement of all learners (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Heath & Heath, 2010; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2010).

Research Questions

In order to determine school leadership considerations of the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom, two research questions guided the study:

1. What do teachers perceive to be their technical and professional socialization needs experienced during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment and how are these met?
2. What are the school principals' perceptions of how they address the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and

implementation of student formative assessment?

Overview of the Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was employed to explore the principals' leadership practices used to address teachers' technical and professional socialization needs during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment. Additionally, the researcher sought the perceptions of teachers regarding their needs during this implementation. According to Yin (2011), the benefits of qualitative research include the ability to share lived experiences, especially when the researcher seeks to answer how to solve a problem. Qualitative research attributes align with this study of how principals provide supports for the professional technical and socialization needs of their teachers. A multiple-site case study was conducted to determine commonalities within multiple organizations with varied contexts and needs. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that confidence is gained when the ability to derive findings from more than one source is available.

Interviews with elementary principals and a focus group with their teachers were conducted at three campuses. A review of relevant documents, including district and campus improvement plans, was conducted to gain insight into identified needs and supports provided to teachers during the implementation of student formative assessment. Teachers and principals were purposefully selected from three campuses within the same district. Participants were required to have a prior three-year history at the respective school during the implementation of student formative assessment. Data obtained from interviews, focus groups, and the review of documents were analyzed following accepted guidelines for analysis in qualitative research. According to Yin (2011), qualitative data

can be combined into levels of categories known as open, axial, and selective coding. Coding of emerging themes within this study was conducted to obtain commonalities between multiple sources.

Furthermore, a grounded theory approach was employed to guide data collection and analysis. According to Charmaz "A grounded theory methods consists of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves." (2009, p. 2)

Definition of Terms

1. Accountability - In this context, accountability is defined as the federal mandate of NCLB (2002) to ensure state expectations of achievement standards for all students, with sanctions for not meeting specified outcomes. Accountability in Texas involved ratings including "Academically Unacceptable", "Acceptable", "Recognized", or "Exemplary" (TEA, 2011). Campuses with less diversity are required to meet the established criteria in the "All Students" category, whereas more diverse schools are required criteria for student groups as small as 30 tested students (TEA, 2011). Schools are required to meet standards for all qualifying student groups enrolled and tested at the campus. These include student ethnicity and economically disadvantaged designations.
2. Address - Refers to the ability to provide support for the technical and professional socialization learning needs of teachers.
3. Conceptual Age - A term coined by Pink (2005) referring to the current and future economy that will thrive on innovation and required empathy due to abundance, automation, and outsourcing of business needs.

4. District Leaders - Refers to district or executive-level administrative leaders of elementary campus principals.
5. Formative Assessment - The use of an intentional process to monitor progress and provide data reflecting students' learning on a continual basis. Teachers utilize student outcomes within the process of student formative assessment to make instructional decisions for the individual (Popham, 2009). These outcomes may be utilized for both intervention and challenge of learning. The term is also synonymous with *student assessment for learning*.
6. Industrial Age – The era in American history in which factories and mass production were the basis for the economy, resulting in basic educational goals often achieved through repetition and physical skill (Pink, 2005).
7. Information Age - The era in American history focusing on information and knowledge-based economies with a left-brain emphasis (Pink, 2005).
8. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act - Federal mandate to ensure state accountability of achievement standards specified for all students, with sanctions against schools or districts for not meeting specified outcomes (NCLB, 2002).
9. Principal - A public school elementary administrator who lead teachers of a particular campus.
10. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) - Educator interactions to review student achievement data for diagnosis of need, intervention, and challenge based upon formative student assessment practices (DuFour et al., 2005).
11. Race to the Top (RTT) - A program formulated by the Obama Administration in 2009 as an incentive to educators. The government challenged schools and states

to compete for financial incentives by providing leadership for the following goals: (a) college- and career-ready students, (b) great teachers and leaders in every school, (c) equity and opportunity for all students, (d) raise the bar and reward excellence, and promote innovation and continuous improvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

12. Socialization Needs - The emotional, affective needs that are fulfilled by interacting with others in a structured, supportive environment in order to learn the norms, skills, and behaviors needed for new learning or change (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heath & Heath, 2010; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011).
13. Technical Needs - The required definitions, manual or scientific skills, knowledge of a new strategy or process, and information required to implement an initiative (Black & Wiliam, 1998).
14. Twenty-First Century Skills – The higher order thinking skills and outcomes students need to compete in a global economy. According to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2013), these include critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation.

Limitations

The qualitative methodology and case-study design are limited in the overall generalizability of the study findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the findings cannot be automatically transferred to other settings without consideration of the context. Due to the nature of the research, the researcher sought to refrain from a biased perception through intentional processes to prevent subjective outcomes. "The words we attach to fieldwork experiences are inevitably

framed by our implicit concepts. … Field notes … are really texts constructed by the field worker" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 9). Thus, the perceptions of the researcher and participants are subject to the limitations of their own experiences.

Delimitations

This study only included participants from three elementary campuses within one public school district in Central Texas during the implementation of student formative assessment. Summative assessment processes were not included. Principals and teachers were the only participants. Additionally, this research did not include the perceptions of other district personnel, students, or parents. The study did not evaluate teacher, principal or campus performance.

Assumptions

This study proceeded with several assumptions. The first assumption was that principals recognized the need to provide at least a minimal degree of support to address both technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the implementation of student formative assessment. A second assumption was that principals were transparent while sharing positive supports of and potential negatives or gaps in teacher needs. Third, teachers participating in the focus group were also assumed to maintain transparency among peers. Finally, it was assumed that the district and campus improvement plans included goals were relevant to the implementation of student formative assessment.

Significance of the Study

Although recent legislation has provided achievement standards and outcomes and research supports the use of data as a best practice, there remains a lack of direction

to campus leaders on how to support faculty in building their capacity to achieve these expectations (Chappius & Chappius, 2008; Jimerson, 2011). The findings from this study may contribute to the knowledge of practitioners (principals and teachers), expanding the understanding of the role of the principal in guiding and supporting teachers during the planning and implementation of formative assessments. Furthermore, this research may also inform leadership preparation programs on the expanded role of the principal in supporting of teacher needs.

Summary

With increasingly demanding accountability systems for American public schools, districts are challenged to implement student assessment for learning to meet the ongoing academic needs of students in every classroom (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Chappius & Chappius, 2008; Wayman et al., 2011). District leaders are faced with the need to support educators during the implementation of effective student formative assessment with limited resources or models to help principals respond to teacher technical and professional socialization needs (Jimerson, 2011; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2010).

This chapter included a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, an introduction to the methodology, and significance of the study. Chapter Two provides a review of existing literature used to frame the historical context of public education, highlight research on teacher needs, introduce the concepts of student formative assessment, and review potential implications for school principals. Chapter Three describes the methodology for this study, as well as sampling criteria, procedures, instruments for data collection, and methods of data analysis. Chapter Four

provides an overview of both the district and campus contexts along with the research findings. Finally, Chapter Five presents an overview of the study, a summary of the major findings and linkages to corresponding literature, as well as a theoretical explanation of the implementation concepts that effect teacher technical and professional socialization needs during the implementation of student formative assessment. The chapter ends with the researcher's concluding thoughts, as well as implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

For decades, American public education was characterized by rudimentary and antiquated instructional methodologies used to provide students with basic skills in preparation for entering agricultural and industrial economies (Pink, 2005). Pink (2005) adds that repetitive and rote skills were common in classrooms of those eras, in order to prepare students for farming, assembly work, or physical labor. Similarly, Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2011) posit that basic educational practices were previously unquestioned as a result of the homogenous composition of students and limited accountability for public school academic achievement outcomes. However, public education and the expectations of student outcomes are rapidly changing, in part due to technological advances of the Information Age that require more complex and advanced higher order thinking skills in order for students to compete in the modern global economy.

With the inception of increased academic requirements mandated by NCLB (2002) and the subsequent Race to the Top incentive program (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), the implementation of student formative assessment by all teachers has become a vital component for schools striving to ensure academic success for all students (Chappius & Chappius, 2008). Schools are simultaneously experiencing a shift from the traditional "loosely coupled" style of educational leadership of the past to an emphasis on strict adherence to research-based instructional delivery practices (Young, 2006, p. 522). These research-based practices are believed to support the mandated achievement outcomes imposed by the state and federal accountability systems. Complicating the

requirements for student achievement is the rapid demographic growth of diverse learners, such as English Language Learners (ELLs) and economically disadvantaged students, who often require specialized instructional delivery (TEA, 2011). Although society and student expectations continue to advance, many outdated and ineffective pedagogical assumptions and practices remain in American classrooms (Pink, 2005). In order to effectively meet the demands of the modern economy, increased state and federal accountability, and shifting student demographics, school district leaders are faced with the task of updating schools with research-based instructional practices and strategies to improve achievement outcomes for all students. This requires a consideration for the professional development needs of teachers (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; TEA, 2011).

Similarly, Chappius and Chappius (2008) suggest the need for formative student assessment and meticulous use of data as vital components of effective classroom instruction. The proper use of formative assessment has been determined to be the keystone of academic transformation needed for modern student success (Wiliam, 2011). Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) suggest that the inherent responsibility to improve student outcomes forces school leaders to confront the challenges of changing both the cultural and academic paradigms of a school. Furthermore, DuFour, Eaker, DuFour, and Many (2010) posit that the modern campus philosophy of a Professional Learning Community encompasses the components needed for teachers to collaborate in the use of formative data for increased student achievement. Although one can assume all educators have a shared goal of student academic growth, there is limited research focusing on how school principals support teachers during the implementation of

effective formative assessment strategies in every classroom to ensure a quality 21st-century education and simultaneously meet state and federal accountability measures (Jimerson, 2011; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Mindich & Leibermann, 2012).

Additionally, school district and campus leaders face the daunting challenge of effective implementation of student formative assessment given the unique context of their campuses (Mindich & Leibermann, 2012). Although research on best practices suggests the need to effectively utilize data, limited studies are available on how to actually lead the faculty who must undergo a paradigmatic change in their practice and long-held instructional beliefs (Jimerson, 2011; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Moss & Brookhart, 2012). The leadership support for enhancing the collection of ongoing student data through the use of formative assessment is a critical instructional component of effective classrooms. The principal is expected to meet the needs of teachers, who require both the technical and professional socialization support in order to incorporate refined, best-practice instruction (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Mindich & Leibermann, 2012). Unlike the more general teaching and leadership models of the past, research suggests that school principals must learn to facilitate collaborative leadership. Furthermore, they must also know how to implement the prescriptive, ongoing, differentiated formative assessment of students while simultaneously addressing the professional development needs of teachers (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam, 2011).

This chapter provides a critical review of the history of assessment in public schools and the evolution of the principal's leadership role in helping teachers meet heightened educational demands. It addresses the historical context of assessment, student formative assessment, and teachers' professional learning needs.

Historical Context of Assessment

Public education has a long-standing history of ongoing scrutiny and resultant changes in philosophical foundations (Marzano, 2003; Pink, 2005). DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Karhanek (2004) describe an era of differentiated schooling in which students were sorted into achievement groups. Additionally, they reported that a sorting process determined a permanent level of expectation and perpetuated a predetermined path for a student's level of academic success.

The 1900s. During the early 1900s, an egalitarian philosophy dictated limited access to secondary and postsecondary education for those students who were not of privileged backgrounds. According to Marzano (2003), the inception of the Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) allowed for schools to limit student potential. Students were sorted and guaranteed only educational access, as opposed to achievement. In contrast to the current era of accountability, intelligence was believed to be a static quotient that predetermined the ability of each student.

The 1950s. Public scrutiny of education began to increase with escalating technological advances and resultant global competitiveness. The origins of this political scrutiny for public education began with the launch of Sputnik in 1957. According to Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2011), Americans consequently began to question the efficacy of public education since the United States failed to yield the first space exploration endeavor. Furthermore, fear and apprehension led to questions about the nation's ability to maintain global competitiveness given the outcomes of its educational system. Thus, Americans began to demand accountability for outcomes from the public school system in order to remain globally competitive (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011).

The 1960s. In 1964, shortly after Sputnik, the federal commissioner of education conducted a research survey to determine the quality and opportunity available within the American public school system (Marzano, 2003). This research is now referred to as the Coleman Report, which consequently highlighted the failure of schools to impact student achievement for those with disadvantaged backgrounds (Marzano, 2003). Within the same decade, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 mandated educational changes to provide equity for disadvantaged students (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Additionally, according to Linn (2000) the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System began performance reviews but with only minimal follow-up or sanctions for a lack of progress.

The 1970s. The 1970s were a period of escalating demand for increased accountability and standards for American schools (Linn, 2000). In 1975, Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was enacted to ensure the rights of students with disabilities in public education (Linn, 2000). As a result, those students with disabilities were also afforded rights to a free and appropriate education. This law later was reauthorized in 1990 as the Individuals With Disabilities Educational Act (Odom, 2007)

The 1980s. *A Nation At Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) characterized the 1980s with criticisms of education by the Reagan Administration. Subsequently, *A Nation Accountable* (U.S. Department of Education, 2008) summarized the 25 years since the report, which included the ongoing political criticisms and legislation that have readdressed public school achievement expectations with each presidency (Marzano, 2003).

The 1990s. During the 1990s, various updates were made to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, passed in 1990 and amended in 1997 (as cited in Linn, 2000). The high-stakes testing era began during this decade, leading to the passage of NCLB (2002). According to Linn (2000) the 1990s was characterized as the decade of refined accountability systems based upon student achievement testing. Both federal and state systems began to closely measure student outcomes derived from state assessment.

2000 to present. Through NCLB (2002), each state was required to incorporate standards for student performance. According to this act, districts that failed to meet federal or state accountability standards faced sanctions. Unlike previous decades, real consequences were imposed for failure to meet standards. Additionally, NCLB shifted focus from general instructional delivery to the required academic achievement growth of each child by 2014, including children in historically underperforming subgroups.

According to the TEA (2011), as a result of NCLB, schools and districts began receiving federal accountability ratings that were determined using student data from mandated annual tests in specific subjects and grade levels. As a result, students' performance these assessments precipitated the creation of a state rating system derived from disaggregated student data, as well (TEA, 2011).

In addition, NCLB (2002) contained requirements for highly qualified teachers that are certified in the areas of assigned instruction. Similar to NCLB, the state of Texas has a history of additional requirements for teachers beyond their university program. According to the TEA (1993), Texas legislation in the 1980s enacted a teacher examination referred to as the Texas Examination of the Current Administrators and Teachers (TECAT) and subsequently required the successful completion of teacher

certification exams after obtaining the appropriate college degree or completing a teacher education program. However, the emerging needs of teachers that resulted from demands related to student assessment were not being addressed, although legislation continued to increase accountability expectations.

Race to the Top: 2009. Following NCLB (2002), the Obama Administration created a program in an attempt to positively respond to educational needs of students and to encourage the implementation of best practices through the provision of funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This administration created an incentive for educators known as Race to the Top in 2009. The government challenged schools and states to compete for financial incentives by providing leadership for the following goals: (a) college- and career-ready students, (b) great teachers and leaders in every school, (c) equity and opportunity for all students, (d) raise the bar and reward excellence, and (e) promote innovation and continuous improvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Within the college and career-ready goal embedded in Race to the Top, the more effective use of student performance data to identify local needs and improve student outcomes is expected (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 11). The Race to the Top program provided financial incentives to school districts that produced outcomes that prepared students for the future, increased educator quality, decreased the achievement gap among student groups, and increased academic achievement outcomes. Texas opted not to participate in the program and therefore did not receive funds (Office of the Governor, 2010).

Public School Accountability in the State of Texas

In order to accept and use federal funds, states are required to meet the federal student achievement mandates; however, each may interpret the laws and create local state legislation. Texas updates the statewide accountability manual annually to determine measures for public schools. Although there is nationwide legislation, Texas had already imposed student assessment outcome requirements throughout recent history.

Assessments. Texas has spent decades implementing and updating testing systems: the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS) in 1979; Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS), 1984; Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), 1990; Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), 2003; and State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), 2012 (TEA, 2010).

State ratings. As a result of the accountability movement, federal mandates urged states to create a school rating system. For instance, based upon the state of Texas assessment outcomes, the Texas Education Agency (2011) issued a rating of "Academically Unacceptable", "Acceptable", "Recognized", or "Exemplary" to each district and campus. The TEA *2011 Accountability Manual* defined the established criteria for campuses through expectations for student outcomes. These groups measures under these requirements include "all students" and subgroups based upon demographic data and standard ratings of achievement for a campus or district (TEA, 2011).

According to the TEA (2011), schools were sanctioned for failure to meet annually specified minimum student achievement standards and received an "Academically Unacceptable" rating. State ratings consisted of levels that began with meeting expectations at an "Acceptable" standard. Following this rating, a campus or

district might obtain the second highest rating of "Recognized". Finally, the highest possible rating was "Exemplary". Each state rating for a campus or district was based upon student achievement percentages disaggregated into demographic groups. These standards were updated annually and ranged from below 75% to above 90%. (TEA, 2011)

Student subpopulations. According to the TEA (2011), state accountability standards in Texas experienced significant changes during the 2011-2012 school year. An English Language Learner (ELL) provision was added to track this students' group progress at both the campus and district levels. Additionally, special education students' scores were included for the first-time in all tested areas. A new base indicator, commended performance, was added as a requirement with a minimum of 25% commended rates for all students and subpopulations to achieve the higher ratings (TEA, 2011).

The Texas Projection Measure (TPM). The state of Texas developed a measure to reward student academic growth although these students did not meet grade-level standard. The use of a projection measure allowed for a student to be considered successful on the state assessment through academic growth. This measure referred to as "TPM" was enacted and subsequently removed from the Texas accountability system. Thus, a successful school year might exhibit more than a year's growth for a particular student, however, although such growth occurred, the student may not have achieved the grade-level standard on the given testing date. This provision supported annual significant student performance growth even if the grade-level standard was not met. In addition to meeting the standard, TPM also allowed for achievement growth to also be

considered a success. Thus, the state allowed for the variation of student academic entry levels. Many campuses and districts benefitted from the incorporation of a growth measure; however, TPM was removed in 2011 (TEA, 2011).

According to the TEA (2011) *Accountability Manual*, campuses without subpopulations may achieve the highest level rating of Exemplary, although they report only homogenous populations. This Texas Accountability Manual outlines state requirements for reporting the performance individual subpopulations of students. The aggregate of students tested from individual ethnic groups, as well as students who are identified as economically disadvantaged represent additional subpopulations that are required to meet state standards. Typically, economically disadvantaged students might often have a higher mobility rate due to financial challenges within the home. Other students might be challenged by homelessness or limited English proficiency. In contrast, more affluent students might often obtain the resources for additional tutoring, language experiences, and life opportunities, which place them at an academic advantage compared to the indigent (TEA, 2011).

Achievement gap. The TEA (2011) reported Hispanic students, once a minority group, currently comprise over 50% of the student population in Texas public schools. In addition, economically disadvantaged students have grown to almost 60% of the statewide student population. The disadvantaged population of students continues to score below non-disadvantaged learners (TEA, 2012a). The current public school system has experienced a substantial achievement gap between these student populations and the traditional middle class. The TEA (2011) Accountability Rating System reported increased standards to include equal progress requirements for minority, ELL, and

economically disadvantaged students. Although the public school system must meet increasing academic standards on state assessments for all students, the growing underprivileged and minority populations lack comparable achievement success in the most basic fundamentals of education in Texas (TEA, 2011). The overall system continues to prepare for a past economy and therefore must change to provide a more adequate education for more complex future career needs (Pink, 2005). With increasing standards and inequitable outcomes, there is a dire economic need to provide successful academic achievement for all students, especially economically disadvantaged and ELL populations that continue to experience rapid growth (TEA, 2011). Public schools are challenged to meet complex daily classroom student performance needs of a changed American demography, to ultimately ensure annual performance standards (Moss & Brookhart, 2012).

Student Formative Assessment

As a result of federal and state accountability measures for student achievement, schools are challenged to provide regular benchmark data for each learner. Consequently, educators are compelled to ensure the on-going achievement of each child to ultimately produce the mandated outcomes (Moss & Brookhart, 2012). In addition, Moss and Brookhart (2012) note a change of instructional focus to individual student progress from a previous teacher-driven classroom culture. These researchers report, "Our beliefs are deeply rooted, often invisible, and highly resistant to change. That's why so many 'tried-but-not-true' methods remain alive and will in our classrooms despite their ineffectiveness" (Moss & Brookhart, 2012, p. 8).

Consequently, Moss and Brookhart (2009) indicate that accountability mandates

require the ongoing use of student achievement data by campus and district staff to effectively determine the required differentiated instruction. Since the outcomes measure individualized achievement, the collaborative use of data has become a heightened and required skill for all educators seeking to meet the varied needs of learners (Moss & Brookhart, 2009). Additionally, Moss and Brookhart (2012) assert, "The most effective teaching and the most meaningful student learning happen when teachers design the right learning target for today's lesson and use it along with their students to aim for and assess understanding" (p. 2).

Formative assessment is a process in which teachers incorporate student input and progress on an on-going basis to produce quality student achievement (Moss & Brookhart, 2012; Wiliam, 2011). According to Moss and Brookhart (2012), teachers are responsible for instruction that monitors student progress. These researchers indicate that throughout the formative assessment process, students are regularly made aware of their progress toward meeting academic goals.

Researchers have suggested utilizing formative assessment processes collaboratively with students as an effective means of increasing student achievement (Wiliam, 2011). According to Wiliam (2011), since teachers cannot predict student learning based upon their lesson plans, they must gather evidence of student progress to determine next steps. As a result, the practice of teaching has changed from planning instruction in isolation to partnering with students to meet shared learning targets. Teachers are expected to innovatively include both the student and peers as resources to self-direct the learning process based upon ongoing assessment (Wiliam, 2011). While it is evident that teachers are responsible to perform student assessments, school leaders

also need to embrace this modern belief system.

New leadership philosophy for student formative assessment. School principals confronted with more stringent directives for achievement outcomes consequently have faced the evolving nature of leadership in supporting refined classroom practices (Young, 2006). Additionally, Young (2006) asserts that since teachers no longer have the option of "loosely coupled" leadership, which previously allowed for curriculum delivery based upon personal preference, campuses are challenged to promote a campus culture of teacher collaboration and expectations for data use that many have yet to experience (Young, 2006, p. 522). The required ongoing assessment of the learner has resulted in a need for the principal to cultivate new teacher norms and build capacity to support these learner-centered efforts (Copland, 2003).

Principal leadership. Principal leadership has been highlighted as a key component of increased student achievement through targeted professional development and formative feedback for teachers (Moss & Brookhart, 2012). A principal's ability to support formative processes embedded in each lesson is believed to be more important to increasing achievement than classroom content knowledge (Moss & Brookhart, 2012). Similarly, Copland (2003) claims that effective leaders share leadership responsibilities with campus-based teacher experts. Principals who embrace modern leadership teams, and shared decision-making find those systems to be powerful support mechanisms during the implementation of student formative assessment (Copland, 2003). Given the significant changes in the nature of the principalship, the educational literature has advocated a balanced, individualized, campus-contextual delivery of leadership (Copland, 2003; Wayman et al., 2011).

Researchers have claimed that for principals to embrace changes in leadership, district supports should be created to provide training and resources to campus principals (Moss & Brookhart, 2012). However, Moss and Brookhart (2012) allude to the lack of coherent guidance within districts. Principals are challenged with providing a redefined level of leadership according to the new expectations of distributed leadership. Additionally, since distributed leadership only began in recent years, many educators may not have experienced models of collaborative decision-making among teachers and leadership. As a result, the principal must change expectations about the current role of campus leadership that will subsequently require specialized skills to meet the new needs of the classroom teacher (Moss & Brookhart, 2012).

Furthermore, according to Copland (2003), distributed leadership may have emotional consequences:

> Teachers assuming new leadership responsibilities, for example, may feel some ambiguity about being enveloped in school-wide controversies from which they are normally buffered (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992, p. 154), or end up isolated from or ostracized by colleagues who view them differently as a result of the change (Lieberman). (p. 378)

Providing distributed leadership requires a different mindset and level of inquiry. In addition, Copland (2003) suggested the implementation of a "Cycle of Inquiry" (p. 380), which encourages reflection and input from all staff members throughout their daily work. According to Copland (2003), school district leaders must determine how innovation can continue to take place in the classroom, school, and on a district-wide level through reflective efforts that "inquire" (p. 394) for the purpose of continuous

improvement. A "culture of inquiry" is reported by experts to effectively produce innovation with shared ownership of the learning process (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Copland, 2003; Wayman et al., 2011). Additionally, Copland (2003) suggests that with the implementation of staff inquiry, the new cultural paradigm for both the teacher and administrator are supported in this change process.

Similarly, Wayman et al. (2011) claim that principals support staff through effective reflective questioning of themselves and one another. The incorporation of the inquiry process allows campuses to build teacher capacity for leadership with accountability. Faculty members are able to lead one another collaboratively while promoting shared responsibility for school improvement away from the traditional top-down approach (Copland, 2003). Teachers participate in collaborative structures for sharing, which minimize isolation and provide for their socio-emotional needs as they support one another through further reflective inquiry. Through the process of inquiry, teachers benefit from involvement in data collaboration and reflective practice (Copland, 2003). As teachers continue to partner and learn with one another, means for sharing are developed (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

According to Black and Wiliam (1998), all stakeholders in educational communities must learn continuously from professional development for sustainable professional growth. Leaders are challenged to provide professional development for teachers, instructional leaders, principals, and district administrators. Similarly, effective modeling will undoubtedly benefit principals as they strengthen the common understandings of teachers who may be new to the concept of collaborative data. There is a challenge to establish these collaborative teams and professional practices that may

not be common in all schools, classrooms or districts (Mindich & Leibermann, 2012).

Through inquiry, principals create a much different organizational management structure than in past eras, allowing for distributed leadership (Copland, 2003). The ability of teachers to learn shared leadership skills will positively impact the sustainability of campus efforts for collective growth. Since many administrators have not experienced distributed leadership, there are limited models from which to learn. Thus, the process for a change of practice will inevitably involve practice and supports for teachers at all levels of the school district (Copland, 2003).

Furthermore, the responsibility for the refinement of campus instructional practices has inevitably become a requirement for every principal. Researchers have asserted that the principals are a key element to true implementation of improvement efforts (Wayman, Jimerson, & Cho, 2010). Similarly, researchers suggest that teachers who have historically experienced a "loosely coupled" leadership are now faced with more stringent collaborative data demands in contrast to their isolated practices of the past (Young, 2006, p. 522). Additionally, Moss and Brookhart (2012) contend that the emphasis on data in discussions about instructional delivery is a modern phenomenon; most educators have not experienced the required use of formative data and collaboration needed to deliver the mandated outcomes. Thus, a new type of leadership is required from the campus principal, which effectively supports the use of student data in every classroom. Since student formative assessment occurs within the classroom, teachers are required to learn the skills to work with all students and determine growth.

Teachers' Learning Needs for Student Formative Assessment

Leaders are challenged with providing not only technical expertise but also socialization support for staff (Heath & Heath, 2010). Aligned with these precepts of change, Heath and Heath (2010) discuss two parts of the human mind in conflict during times of transformation, the "rational" and "emotional" (p. 6). Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2011) agree with these dual needs and refer to them as the "will" and "skill" needs of staff (p. 230). Administrators are advised to make decisions based on their level of expertise and engage in intentional planning to support both skill and emotion. Therefore, given that teachers need to provide effective instruction, particular attention must be paid to the technical and professional socialization needs of the faculty.

According to Moss and Brookhart (2009), "best practice" research has become more prevalent in the educational community, providing expectations for student support through an emphasis on ongoing student assessment. Literature on best practices has reported that evaluating students on a regular basis is no longer an option (Moss & Brookhart, 2009). Previous research also reinforces the need to address potential "negative effects" related to the implementation of formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 147). As instructional practice has shifted away from traditional educational philosophies, faculty require holistic teaching supports which address both technical and professional socialization needs, intensifying the challenge of implementing student formative assessment.

Framework for analysis of teacher needs. The framework developed by Freiberg & Olivaréz (1978) serves as a relevant model for consideration of teacher needs. The holistic role of the teacher, which incorporates the teacher as a performer of

technical, social, and pedagogical skills (Figure 1), has been posited as a framework for teacher development (Freiberg & Olivaréz, 1978). As a result, school leaders are encouraged to address the various facets of the teacher position.

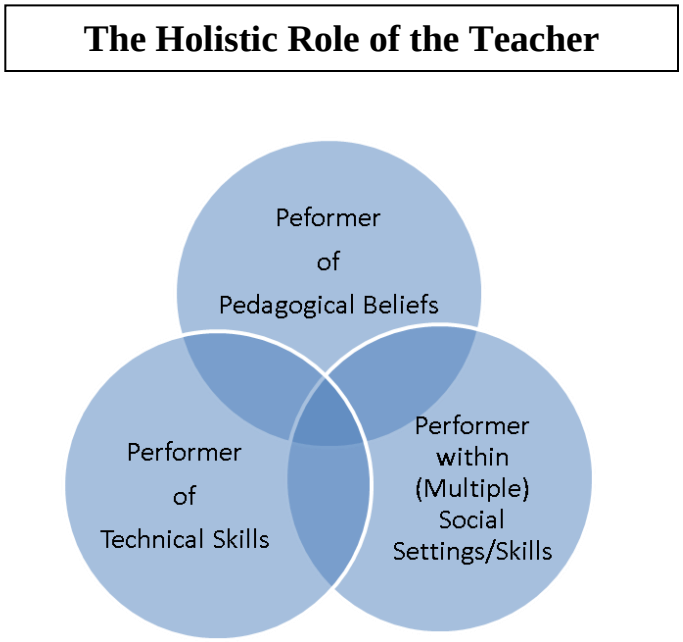

Figure 1. Framework for the holistic role of the teacher

This framework portrays the development of the classroom teacher through the interconnected concepts necessary for a teacher to effectively perform a role that requires three distinct needs: knowledge and skills, working with others through collaborative efforts, and educational beliefs and attitudes. The comprehensive in-services required to meet all teachers' needs should support the varied roles of the position, which necessitates skills beyond mere technical knowledge (Freiberg & Olivaréz, 1978). According to Freiberg and Olivaréz (1978), embedded within the holistic role of the teacher are eight competency categories necessary to provide effective instruction within a school setting (see Figure 2). These researchers assert that teachers must participate in

various social settings to provide for the needs of the student within a public school context of kindergarten through Grade 12.

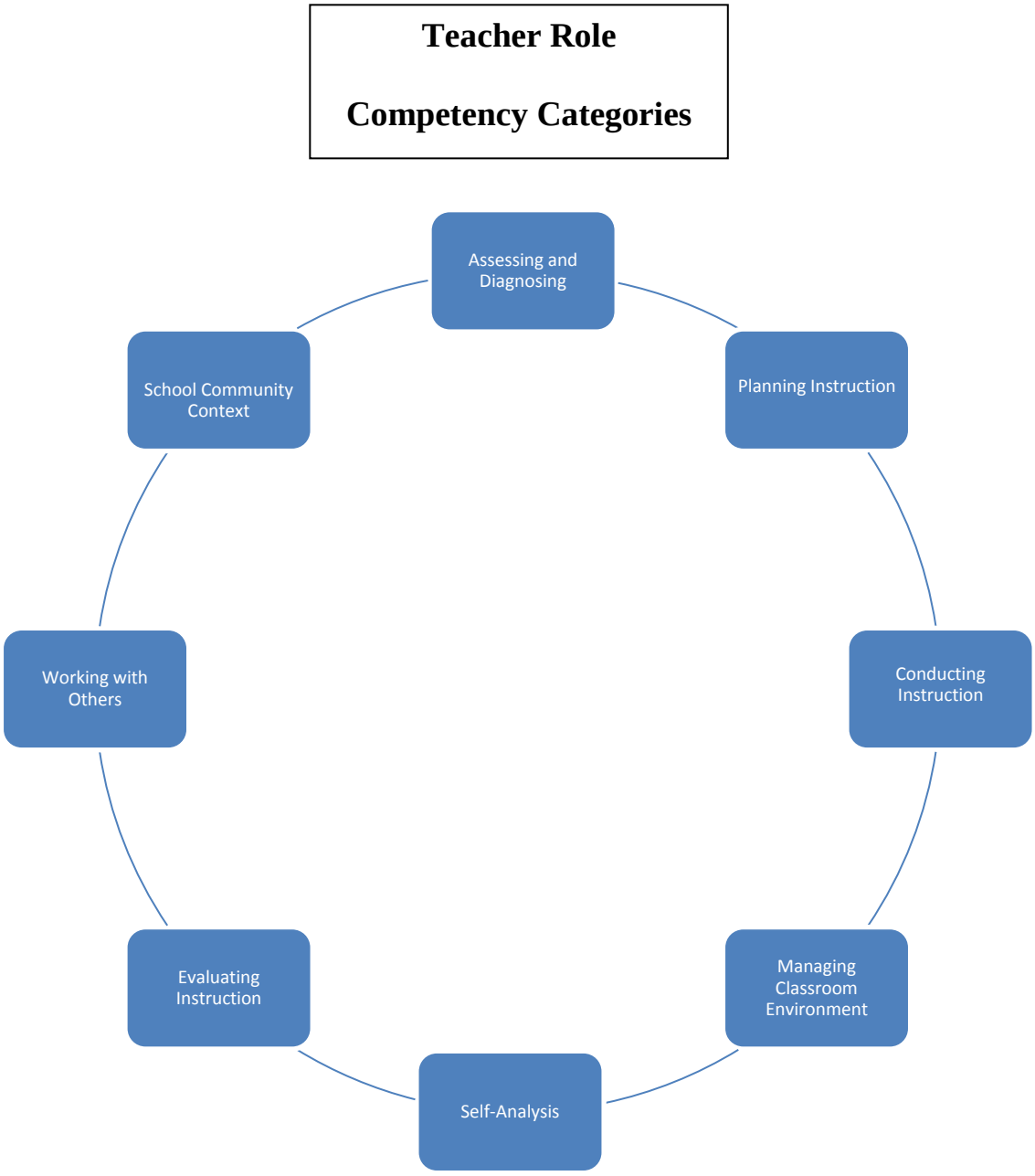

Figure 2. Role of the teacher: Eight competency categories.

According to Freiberg & Olivaréz (1978), the classroom teacher is in a position that requires collaborative efforts to ensure the necessary instructional best practices to deliver the curriculum and content to students through eight competency categories. These researchers report alongside peers, a teacher is required to work within a team including auxiliary personnel, administrators and community. Additionally, the teacher is expected to deliver instruction through careful analysis of self and diagnosis of student needs. The teacher is also required to evaluate the outcomes of the lesson and provide adjustments based upon student feedback. The complexity of learning the artistry levels of the teaching position supports the need for principals to provide for varied needs of students through the development of their teachers (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Therefore, campus principals are expected to address teachers' learning needs of both skill and relationships (Freiberg & Olivaréz, 1978).

Teacher technical learning needs. Given the new demands of formative assessment, teachers inevitably will need to learn how to determine collective definitions, structure time for sharing student progress, and ensure alignment with the curriculum as they engage in collaborative efforts (Copland, 2003; Wiliam, 2011). Campus and district leaders are responsible for ensuring that teacher expertise is enhanced through the acquisition of new skills during the implementation of student formative assessment. Teachers will need for their principals to consider processes for teachers to learn the new information required for successful implementation of student formative assessment. The assessment and diagnosis of student needs serves as an initial effort to implement student formative assessment. Teachers' technical needs may refer to steps to new learning, common understandings, use of data in various forms, calibration and structures of time.

Steps to new learning. The implementation of student formative assessment involves intentional planning for teachers to acquire new skills and seek guidance from their leaders in order to ensure the most effective process for sustainability. Through the consideration of the needs of teaching staff, a district can best provide support to teachers through differentiation of expectations and delivery of professional development. In an effort to minimize negative consequences of change and acquire information for new development, Black and Wiliam (1998) propose four steps for implementing ongoing learner assessment. According to Black and Wiliam (1998) the faculty should first learn and develop new teaching skills. Second, teachers should be allowed to experience initial slow dissemination of expectations for the use of new skills. Additionally, they should be provided with leadership that reduces obstacles to new learning. Finally, teachers should be supported through opportunities for shared innovation through research. Given the myriad of considerations, the principal must carefully consider leadership artistry in balancing both the professional technical and socialization needs of teachers (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Common understandings. The engagement of faculty is suggested by Moss & Brookhart (2012) to be a vital component in the process of collectively defining initiatives, new terminology, and making programmatic decisions. These common understandings of all new information reduce potential new learning obstacles. The ability to collectively define concepts supports a more effective implementation, leading to greater efficacy in learning initiatives (Moss & Brookhart, 2012). Since any change may result in resistance, the staff ownership of shared understandings will provide a strong foundation for the organization (Wayman et al., 2011). Similarly, Wayman et al.

(2011) assert that the faculty members need to learn from each other through the development of shared definitions for data use and goals for formative assessment implementation outcomes. They suggest involving teachers in developing a shared vision for how data will be used in order to attend to the affective response to change. Further, the collective engagement of teachers moves towards shared ownership and away from traditional campus management (Copland, 2003). Although fostering common understandings supports the affective needs of teachers, a primary concern is to collectively understand the technical definition of new terms, strategies, and proven successes (Copland, 2003).

Further, according to DuFour & Fullan (2013), teachers should also have the ability to provide on-going, two-way communication with their principal:

> Think of the process as one of stepping up two-way communication during implementation. Two vital things get accomplished. One is that there are multiple opportunities for clarifying and refining the vision and the strategy as you go. The other is that you are soliciting feedback; there are built-in processes for identifying and addressing problems. The double advantage is the people are listened to, and problems surface so they can be addressed. (p. 26)

Use of data in various forms. Student data encompasses a broad range of information for a particular student and is not limited to assessment (Wayman, et al., 2010). The ability to engage in ownership of student growth based on personalized data by students alongside their parents, teachers, campus leaders, and district administrators is vital (Hipp, Huffman, Pankake, & Olivier, 2008). Additionally, Wayman, et al. (2010) suggest that while the collaborative use of data is crucial for school learning, there is also

a broad definition of data, which includes any information that helps teachers know more about their students. According to Wayman, et al. (2010) data should not be limited to one source and may also include information related to school attendance, demographics, health history, family, and sociological needs.

Although data use for instructional improvement is essential, school improvement goals require leadership artistry, which incorporates expectations of accountability, integrated professional development supports, and considerations for the sociological context of each educational community (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Copland, 2003). Furthermore, Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) propose that the principal lead the staff in viewing data as more than a measure of accountability.

Calibration. School-wide technical learning remains an important element of student formative assessment; however, efforts to ensure all faculty members share the same understanding are vital. Since information associated with student formative assessment processes may be relatively new to a campus, Wayman, Jimerson et al. (2010) assert there is a need to align expectations through-out both campuses and districts. In addressing teachers' technical needs, Wayman, Jimerson et al. (2010) conclude that principals should confirm the calibration of expectations regarding the use of data.

Given the breadth of formative assessment initiatives, district-wide agreement on definitions was determined to be vital to the effectiveness of implementation. District leaders can support campus principals by modeling processes to ensure staff members are aligned in their efforts to utilize formative assessment processes and in their collective understandings of technical definitions (Spanneut, 2010). As school leaders, affective concerns such as resistance, training deficits, and new innovations can be addressed

through collaboration at the district and campus levels (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Structures for time. Data collaboration requires teachers to devote time to review and discuss formative assessment outcomes (Spanneut, 2010). Aligned with the needs of a professional learning community of teachers, Spanneut (2010) proposed embedding time for teachers to meet within the school day. Additionally, Wayman, Jimerson, et al. (2010) maintain that the district's ability to allow for campus differentiated expectations to provide this structure for time will support the authentic engagement and ownership through self-determined efforts. Likewise, Wayman, Jimerson, et al. (2010) encouraged timely collaboration in reviewing and reflecting upon student data. These researchers support designated time for teacher data sharing with each other and assert regular interactions are a necessary component to provide best-practice formative assessment of students.

Teacher professional socialization learning needs. Teachers, at times, are forced into partnerships with peers to conduct collaborative data use and planning. Thus, principals are required to consider their affective needs. As teachers progress in their learning, discovering needs that extend beyond skills and information is inevitable. As Black and Wiliam (1998) acknowledge, the implementation of student formative assessment is more than a technical issue. According to Copland (2003), even after the initial stages of a new process, additional support challenges remain. Therefore, efforts are likely to proceed more smoothly if principals position themselves as facilitators rather than catalysts or change agents through force. Along with a team, the principal is required to walk the fine line between providing teacher support for the increased demands and healthy pressure to deliver student achievement growth (Copland, 2003).

During the implementation of student formative assessment, the classroom teacher is not only required to understand technical information. New processes and techniques will also require professional socialization supports. Teacher socialization needs may include a culture of professional learning, collaboration, and a moderate pace for new learning.

A culture of professional learning. Teachers are expected to engage in multiple structures for quality professional learning through intentional processes that are uniquely planned to fit the educator's context (Copland, 2003). Additionally, Black & Wiliam (1998) suggest that effective teacher-learning processes may serve to enhance technical and professional socialization learning. Teachers can provide real-life examples of learning assessment, which can serve as a model for other teachers who may be hesitant to incorporate data into daily pedagogical practice. As a result, positive peer influence and support may be instrumental in helping teachers change their practice. Thus, the principal and other leaders are challenged with situating peers in a way that promotes a campus culture of professional learning. Additionally, DuFour & Fullan (2013) suggest that reciprocal accountability for the teacher's implementation of new learning and principal's provision of resources as vital components for teacher socialization growth and development.

Collaboration. Teachers are expected to work closely with peers during the implementation of student formative assessment and therefore there's a need for additional professional socialization supports from the principal. In an effort to learn from peers and decrease opposition from teachers, campuses may allow time for teacher collaboration beyond structured informational meetings. The ability to provide the

structure for teams to collaboratively work in meaningful activities that will be utilized in the normal course of their individual work has proven to be more engaging and meaningful to teachers (Wayman, et al., 2010). The previous teacher learning structure was generally a one-way delivery of professional development, which often occurred in isolation (Young, 2006). Therefore, according to Chappius and Chappius (2008), teachers can improve instructional practice by forming social relationships with peers that allow for sharing with similar professionals through engaging in joint data analysis and planning. The collaborative culture of meaningful learning directly related to a teacher‘s practice has the most impact on learning new information, such as in the implementation of a student formative assessment initiative (Copland, 2003).

Pacing. Expectations about learning should vary according to the teacher's need, which requires the principal to intentionally plan for the introduction and expectation for the teacher to deliver new learning (Fullan, 2001). Teacher sharing is beneficial to faculty growth and development. However, according to Black and Wiliam (1998), "Dissemination efforts would be in low gear at the outset—offering schools no more than encouragement and explanation of relevant evidence that they might consider in light of their existing practices. … This process will inevitably be a slow one" (p. 147). Consequently, leaders are cautioned to allow adequate time for teachers to develop new practices and pursue advancements at a pace that allows for belief changes, instead of mere compliance. In the initial planning phases, leaders are encouraged to consider the pace appropriate for the teachers' capacities.

Leaders are advised to minimize the negative outcomes of change by addressing the emotional and affective components of learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heath &

Heath, 2010). According to Black & Wiliam (1998), the changes that must take place during the implementation necessitate best-practices, which require principals to consider the needs of teachers. As researchers suggest that the implementation of student formative assessment may cause unrest and fear amongst teachers since long-held philosophical beliefs are challenged (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Campus principals are charged with the task of addressing these teacher professional socialization needs, in addition to facilitating the technical aspects of implementation. Challenging the central beliefs and assumptions of an organization means that principals will need to work to intentionally minimize teacher fears, frustrations, and insecurities provoked by these changes (Fullan, 2001). Given teacher technical and professional socialization needs, school leaders are urged to search for innovative methods that facilitate the collaborative development of teachers to ensure effective implementation of student formative assessment. One such paradigm is the Professional Learning Community (PLC) advanced by Eaker, DuFour and DuFour (2002).

Professional Learning Communities

A paradigm that promises to support teachers' professional socialization and technical learning needs is known as a Professional Learning Community (PLC). According to Eaker, DuFour, and DuFour (2002) the implementation of PLCs promotes data collaboration among modern educators. In a PLC, teachers gather during structured periods and utilize an agenda that focuses on outcomes of student formative assessment. Eaker et al. (2010) propose a PLC agenda containing three questions:

1. What will students learn?

2. How will we know what students are learning?

3. How will we respond when students do not learn? (p. 41)

Campuses are challenged to focus on collaborative work and plan closely together with colleagues utilizing formative assessment data. However, DuFour et al. (2004) caution that a principal must value implementation efficacy over remaining in a comfortable relationship with staff. Thus, principals are now in a position in which they are expected to uphold current best-practice collaborative instruction and accept potential disharmony at the onset of learning a new process (DuFour et al, 2004).

Similarly, Wahlstrom and Seashore Louis (2008) state that recent achievement demands have moved school cultures from isolated classroom teaching to collaborative, learner-focused organizations made possible through a PLC model. Additionally, these researchers note that PLCs foster a positive partnership between teachers and students, improving student efficacy of the learning process. Thus, the teachers' focus on differentiated practice with ongoing feedback provides a promising process to ensure student achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Furthermore, Eaker et al. (2002) observe that:

> More traditional schools tend to make decisions based primarily on how well teachers "like" particular approaches. (A professional learning community recognizes that feelings are important, but makes the primary basis for embedding particular practices into the school culture the effect these practices have on student learning.) (p. 21)

Similarly, Hipp et al (2008) report that PLCs should continually focus on ensuring that student learning is promoted through collaborative campus actions and school-wide decisions. Teachers are encouraged to revisit the purpose for learning and collaborate to meet the needs of all students as individuals. As a result, student outcome data becomes the focus of teacher conversations and planning. Educators commonly agree upon the precepts of PLCs; however, the principal becomes the driving force in promoting the concepts until the transformation of norms has occurred (Spanneut, 2010).

However, not all campuses experience smooth implementation of PLCs. DuFour et al. (2004) explains, "Perhaps there are schools that have made the transition to a PLC without conflict or anxiety, but we are unaware of any. Disagreements and tensions are to be expected" (p. 144). Therefore, according to previous research, principals will inevitably be expected to provide support to reduce the negative feelings associated with a school culture change. Additionally, Mindich and Leibermann (2012) assert that the inception of new teacher norms will require the school leader to anticipate the professional socialization learning needs of the campus staff. They indicate that the ability to work through disagreements and tensions is vital for the principal to continue to build an effective learning community.

Though there is a need for close collaboration among teachers on student outcomes, DuFour et al. (2004) suggest that cultivating the PLC have proven difficult for every school:

> The faculties of each of the four schools cited in the preceding chapters became enthusiastic advocates for the collaborative culture and systematic interventions that are so critical to the PLC concept. It is also important to note, however, that

> in every case, the principals faced the challenge of one or more staff members who were either aggressively or passively resistant to the new direction of their school. (p. 143)

Even as they seek to provide best-practice collaboration and instruction, principals inevitably will need to learn the skills to deal with resistance from staff (DuFour et al., 2004; Fullan, 2001). How the school leader deals with resistance will influence the sustainability of campus efforts. Merely mandating best practices or providing information about a PLC will not produce the desired permanent philosophical changes. Likewise, teachers will need to learn the detailed elements of formative assessment processes.

Implications of Implementing Student Formative Assessment

The enhanced demands for student achievement outcomes have increased school accountability and have changed the responsibilities of both the principal and teacher (Wahlstrom & Seashore Louis, 2008). Although accountability provides a common goal for all educators, in order to ensure the achievement of all students, individual campuses should implement quality formative assessment processes that are appropriate for their circumstances (Chappius & Chappius, 2008). Furthermore, it is important to forge a collaborative relationship between the leader and faculty, determining through a cooperative process that instructional paradigm changes are necessary and instituting a plan that ensure that changes are sustainable (Fullan, 2001). Mandates for teacher training programs require the continual development and certification of educators; however, these requirements do not include best-practice professional development resources, models, or instructions on how to meet the increased achievement demands

(Jimerson, 2011). According to Jimerson (2011), policy mandates with stringent expectations for student achievement have met the classroom practitioner with a void of resources and needed supports. Consequently, at least two distinctive implications must be recognized. These relate to district and campus leadership.

Student assessment implications for district leadership. Leaders at the school district level are required to implement effective instructional strategy supports for teachers that will result in the necessary achievement outcomes for students in order to meet increasing state and federal guidelines (Moss & Brookhart, 2012). Compounding the federal and state requirements for student assessment outcomes are the political implications of a school rating for each campus and district (Bolman & Deal, 1998;TEA, 2011). According to the TEA (2011), ratings impose direct and indirect sanctions on districts, which ultimately affect the entire community. Thus, districts face the increasing challenge of providing for the needs of a shifting student population with more underprivileged learners (TEA, 2012a). Factors such as student mobility, language, and economic background add to the complexity of instructional needs (TEA, 2012a). As a result, district leadership are required to provide the support for complex student and teacher needs while also accountable to the faculty and community for student achievement results.

The context of each district and demographic composition vary; however, the accountability system issues the same standard ratings for all (TEA, 2011). The intense pressures experienced are closely related to the student achievement data reporting systems available through campus and district ratings (TEA, 2012b). Additionally, according to the measures indicated by the *2011 Accountability Manual* (TEA, 2011), as

few as four students may impact a rating with demographic subgroups of 30 students. Additionally, the 2013 Texas Legislature enacted HB 2836 to limit the number of benchmarks a school district may administer. As a result, districts will have a responsibility to refine the implementation of student formative assessment for every classroom.

Student assessment implications for campus leadership. Given the complex requirements for student academic outcomes, principals must provide for the professional development of the teacher to conduct effective student formative assessment processes (Black & Wiliam, 1998). According to Jimerson (2011) the modern principal is expected to serve as an instructional leader to ensure district and campus goals are met. Additionally, Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2011) indicate that school leaders must determine how to meet achievement goals given the unique context of their school. Also, DuFour et al. (2004) assert that, contrary to the historical philosophy of limiting achievement to only the elite, all children's needs must be equitably met. Currently, the quality of an educational program is highly dependent upon the leadership of a principal with the ability to ensure that teachers have the capacity to deliver the required best-practice instruction (Copland, 2003; Lachat & Smith, 2005; Wayman, Jimerson, et al., 2010).

Although principals may embrace and enact the distributed leadership necessary to meet the modern needs of the classroom, teachers need professional socialization learning supports while attempting to begin such an unknown process (Copland, 2003). Since the concepts of distributed leadership are relatively new to school culture, few faculty members might be familiar with such leadership (Jimerson, 2011; Mindich &

Leibermann, 2012). According to Black and Wiliam (1998), intentional attempts to minimize the negative consequences of change are needed, thus requiring the principal to individually discern structures for collaborative decision-making based upon the needs of each organization (Bolman & Deal, 1998).

Each campus in a school district can be assumed to have potentially unique communities. Therefore, schools should allow for self-determination, which can be applied to unique campus ethos and how to reach a collective goal (Wayman, Jimerson, et al., 2010). Furthermore, Copland (2003) notes that principals must be skilled in balancing the various unique instructional strengths and needs of the campus to facilitate teacher capacity in their new roles in shared leadership. Since districts cannot prescribe the necessary ingredients or protocols for principals, often the campus administrator is confronted with determining the necessary steps for school improvement with limited guidance (Jimerson, 2011; Mindich & Leibermann, 2012), as it is with the case of student formative assessment.

Although professional collaboration to meet school needs may seem practical, the actual work has been shown to be difficult to achieve (Mindich & Leibermann, 2012). Thus, both rational and emotional teacher needs should be addressed to produce sustainable change (Heath & Heath, 2010). Ultimately, the principal is required to provide quality professional development and leadership for the needs of their teachers (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Mindich & Leibermann, 2012). Therefore, this study will focus on how the principal supports the professional technical and socialization needs of teachers during the implementation of student formative assessment.

Conclusion

The evolution of education from a "loosely coupled" organization providing merely educational access to one with mandated individualized student achievement has resulted in a need for refined implementation of best-practice instruction (Young, 2006, p. 522). Thus, providing for individualized student instruction with the expectation of academic growth has necessitated the collaborative use of data to drive instruction (Wiliam, 2011). The outdated practice of teaching in isolation has evolved with the creation of teacher communities. Using PLC processes, teachers collaborate to analyze assessment data in order to improve student outcomes; meeting or even exceeding mandated requirements (Wiliam, 2010). Though research provides on best practices suggests several effective strategies, the school principal must determine how to implement student formative assessment, while supporting teachers' technical and professional socialization learning needs (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Jimerson, 2011).

The principal must carefully guide faculty through technical information and professional socialization in order to conduct effective student formative assessment at the campus level. Due to varied contexts, district leadership cannot prescribe a protocol to match the needs of all teachers or campuses (Mindich & Leibermann, 2012). Thus, the campus leader must have the capacity and reflective ability to meet the professional needs of each teacher. More importantly, the principal must be able to self-reflect upon personal leadership paradigms and beliefs to ensure teacher guidance is properly aligned with district initiatives. Likewise, new training for teachers is necessary to provide the knowledge of complex concepts, such as individualized progress monitoring, data collection, and group dynamics of educators. Thus, time must be spent to collectively

understand and embrace the new focus on the student, rather than evaluating only the actions of the teacher. Such expected paradigmatic shifts can potentially elicit strong emotional responses from educators based upon their prior lack of successful experiences. Minimizing negative outcomes of change and providing new learning remain paramount (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Once again, the principal is urged to find ethical means to engage teachers in supporting and producing the espoused aligned goals (Fullan, 2001).

A teacher's ability to comprehend such complex processes of distributed leadership and student formative assessment requires the appropriate professional development to meet the rational and emotional responses to new learning (Heath & Heath, 2010). According to Fullan (2001),

> Leaders who understand the implementation dip know that people are experiencing two kinds of problems when they are in the dip-- the social-psychological fear of change, and the lack of technical know-how or skills to make change work. (p. 41). Principals must work through teacher resistance to evoke change and, consequently, must provide for the "will" and "skill" of each faculty member (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011, p. 230).

Given the increased requirements for state accountability and need for student formative assessment through teacher collaboration, the structures and communication requirements of leaders to ensure effective best-practice implementations may be relatively unknown to most principals.

Clearly, concepts associated with student formative assessment are complex and require leadership to support the varied needs of teachers (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Consequently, Fullan (2001) explained, "The problems start when you are only authoritative or only affiliative or only a coach" (p. 41). As a result, principals need to provide leadership supports for both the technical skills and the associated socialization needs.

This chapter provided an overview of the historical context of assessment in public education, student assessment within the State of Texas, and student formative assessment. Insight into teachers' potential technical and professional socialization needs was also presented. Additionally, the chapter discussed the impact of student formative assessment with implications for school principals. Student formative assessment is a powerful method to help schools meet the increasing requirements for student achievement outcomes. Implementing campus-wide formative assessment that is most likely to have a positive effect on instruction for all students must proceed with a recognition and appreciation of teacher needs and the strategies principals use to address those needs. Chapter Three outlines the methodology and study design, sampling criteria, instruments for data collection, and procedures for data analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This study explores perceptions regarding the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom. A qualitative methodology was employed to seek the lived experiences and perceptions of both teachers and principals through a multiple-case study with a grounded theory approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The utilization of a grounded theory approach allowed the development of theoretical explanations addressing all aspect of this study do not exist. As Charmaz suggests, "Data formed the foundation of our theory and our analysis of this data generates the concepts we construct" (2009, p. 2). This chapter reviews the purpose of the study and research questions. An overview of the research method design, data collection instruments, and data analysis processes are also outlined.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how school principals addressed *both* the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom, a strategy used to provide for the academic achievement of all learners (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Heath & Heath, 2010; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2010).

Research Questions

Two main research questions were addressed:

1. What do teachers perceive to be their technical and professional socialization needs experienced during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment and how are these met?
2. What are the school principals' perceptions of how they address the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment?

Research Method and Design

A qualitative methodology was selected for this study as the most appropriate means of gathering participant perceptions regarding the teacher technical and socialization needs during the implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom. This utilized a multi-site case study design with a grounded theory approach.

Qualitative Research Methodology

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are many benefits of qualitative research. It allows for the study of ordinary events in natural setting; events occur in real life with an emphasis on the human lived experiences. Qualitative research allows for perceptions and assumptions and for connecting meanings to the social world. It also aims to provide "thick descriptions" that are "vivid" and "nested in a real context" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Further, other benefits of qualitative research include incorporation of "lived experience" through "thick descriptions" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Participants are able to share their experiences with the researcher and provide pertinent data for analysis based upon their unique contexts.

Additionally, Miles and Huberman (1994) address the limitations involved with the qualitative method, such as impression management. The process of compiling data through interviews and focus groups requires self-awareness to avoid researcher bias. An additional limitation is that study findings have limited generalizability, except to campuses that might have similar contexts. Miles and Huberman (1994) caution the researcher to carefully examine an individual's ability to portray a certain desired image. It is important to consider that qualitative data are subject to the participants' input and researcher's ability to effectively create an accurately described written account.

Grounded Theory Approach

A grounded theory approach was utilized to inductively produce generalizations from the data collected to construct a theory (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Grounded theorists usually address the following components:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis
- Constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypothesis
- Using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis
- Advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis
- Memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps
- Sampling aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness
- Conducting the literature review after developing an independent analysis. (Charmaz, 2009, p. 5-6)

Through the analysis of findings, the researcher was able to determine concepts, comparisons, differences, and emerging themes that led to the development of a framework.

Case Study Design

According to Ellinger et al. (2009), "Case study research is most appropriate when the research is interested in how, what, and why questions" (p. 4). Similarly, Willis, Jost, and Nilakanta (2007) illustrate benefits to case study including the ability to inductively determine a hypothesis based upon the data gathered. Additionally, case studies allow for the consideration of each unique environment (Willis et al, 2007). Thus, the inquiry process into how school leaders contextually support the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers lends itself to case study research (Ellinger et al., 2009).

According to Willis et al. (2007), case study research is recognized as the optimal method to determine "lived experience in the social context" (p. 240). Furthermore, Miles and Huberman (1994) posit, "Multiple-case sampling adds confidence to findings by looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases" (p. 29). The ability to include the perceptions and experiences of multiple sites and people provided rich, descriptive research.

Site and Sample Selection

This qualitative study required a purposeful selection of a specific setting as well as particular participants. A Central Texas school district was the setting for research. A purposeful selection for the setting included a public school institution with recent district implementation of student formative assessment. The selection of the site was completed

at two levels, the district and campus.

District Selection Criteria

The criteria for the district site selection was as follows:

- Public school district in Central Texas
- "Recognized" or "Exemplary" state rating from the 2010-2011 school year
- Three years of experience with campus-wide implementation of student formative assessment

Since the most recent method of state ratings is derived from state accountability during the 2010–2011 school year, a district must have received either of the two highest designations, "Recognized" or "Exemplary" status based upon the most current rankings by the Texas Education Agency (2011) at the time of the study. According to the Texas Education Agency (2011), an "Exemplary" rating is the highest possible ranking for a public school during the most recently issued state accountability ratings. The second highest rating is "Recognized", followed by "Acceptable", and then by the lowest rating of "Unacceptable". Additionally, the district must contain at least three "Exemplary" or "Recognized" rated elementary campuses with three years of campus-wide implementation of student formative assessment.

Campus Selection Criteria

According to the most recent method of state ratings derived from state accountability issued during the 2010–2011 school year, campuses are rated as Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, and Academically Unacceptable according to specific state requirements. Taking this rating into account, three campuses were selected based upon the following criteria:

- Received either of the two highest TEA (2011) designations, "Exemplary" followed by "Recognized".
- An elementary campus must include experienced teachers with 3 years of campus-wide implementation of student formative assessment
- The campus must be one of the three selected from the same school district.

Principal. Once the three campuses were identified, three elementary school principals were selected according to specific criteria:

- The principal for each of the three campuses must have three consecutive years of experience at the same campus.
- Additionally, the principal must have led the teachers participating in the study during the campus-wide implementation of student formative assessment.
- The principal must be at one of the three selected campuses within the one public school district that has received either the second highest rating "Recognized" or top "Exemplary" status according to the TEA (2011).
- Principals must have been the campus leader for three consecutive school years 2010-2013.

Teachers. The purposeful selection of teachers to participate in a focus group was based upon the criteria of a minimum of three years of consecutive experience at the same elementary school during the campus-wide implementation of student formative assessment. Since state accountability is derived from testing at upper elementary grade levels, teacher leaders or a representative from each grade (third through fifth grade) were invited to participate in the study to ensure campus-wide representation. The principal confirmed teacher eligibility.

Data Sources

Several data collection methods were employed. These included interviews, focus groups, and document reviews. Additionally, field notes and memo reflections by the researcher were written throughout the study.

Role of the Researcher as an Instrument

The researcher is expected to gain insight into a setting while eliminating bias to best learn from participants (Yin, 2011). Consequently, the researcher must be prepared to adequately present all associated factors of the fieldwork (Yin, 2011). The researcher was prepared to conduct this study due to twenty years of experience as an educator, with six as a teacher, six as an assistant principal, and eight years as a campus principal with multiple special programs. Additionally, the researcher has led a campus for the current and previous four school years with the implementation of formative assessment since the school's inception in 2008. The researcher's experience includes leadership at campuses with diverse student populations and at a campus where all teachers were required to utilize formative assessment practices. As an experienced practitioner, the researcher was intentional with specific questions and body language during interviews to illicit transparent principal responses. Additionally, while conducting a focus group with teachers, the researcher must ensure understanding of the classroom perspective and maintain a rapport of inquiry in all words and actions. Similarly, Yin (2011) suggests that for researchers to learn from people, the following must occur:

- Speak in modest amounts.
- Be nondirective.
- Stay neutral.

- Maintain rapport
- Use an interview protocol.
- Analyze when interviewing. (p. 136-139)

Careful, intentional body language and tone was necessary to ensure the most humanly transparent responses. In an effort to promote transparency, the researcher made intentional attempts to remain neutral during the research process. Additionally, the researcher sought a rapport with the participants by initiating the process with open-ended questions. This allowed for the participants to describe strengths of the student formative assessment implementation at their campus. Since the researcher is a similarly situated practitioner, the principal respondents may be confident the researcher did not judge or attempt to gauge their implementation efforts. Likewise, teachers were able to share their experiences with the researcher, whether they felt needs were met or lacking.

By the researcher revealing personal experience as an elementary principal practitioner, the teachers were reassured the process was to gain experiences and perspectives rather than seek a "right" answer. Since the researcher is not the campus administrator, teachers were able to participate in a focus group with transparency of shared experiences.

Finally, Yin (2011) reported the types of qualitative data methods and corresponding benefits with "structures of interviewing, conversing, observing, collecting, and feeling" (p. 129). The ability of the researcher to effectively utilize these structures provided the necessary data for the study.

Interviews

This study utilized interviews conducted with principals through a developed

protocol with questions relating to how they address the professional technical and socialization needs of teachers during the implementation of formative assessment, including suggestions for principal consideration (see Appendix A). Each interview with a principal was conducted individually to support obtaining the most candid responses. The benefit of interviews is a collective representation of all participants, which was achieved through the combination of collected experiences (Willis et al., 2007, p. 244). Standard prompts and expectations were reviewed with the participants prior to conducting the interview. Existing prompts and ground rules for the protocol were derived from Champion (2007). An individual interview was conducted with each campus principal, lasting between 30 minutes to one hour. Thus, a total of three interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed.

Focus Groups

This study utilized a data collection technique described by Yin (2011) as a focus group, which is comprised of individuals with a common experience or perspective. A moderator serves to gather information from the group. Teachers participated in a semi-structured focus group at each of the three campuses to discuss the professional technical and socialization needs of teachers. The process was semi-structured to allow for individual elaboration and evolving themes to be constructed by the respondents. A focus group protocol was developed by the researcher to elicit information (see Appendix B); however, participant depth of conversation moderated by the researcher provided the needed data from which conclusions were developed. Standard prompts and focus group ground rules were reviewed prior to conducting the research. Prompts and ground rules for the protocol were derived from Champion (2007). There were three focus groups

conducted with teachers at each campus that were audio-taped and transcribed. These focus groups were approximately 30-45 minutes each.

Review of Relevant Documents

A review of public documents, such as campus and district improvement plans, allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the district-level initiatives to the campus goals. According to Yin (2011), document review of archival data is a valid research resource. School districts and campuses are required to maintain annual improvement plans, which are on file within each district and readily accessed as public documents (Texas Education Code, 2011). The information gathered provided insight into the annual focus to address district and campus needs. However, since the information was utilized to understand the context only, the researcher did not ask questions, clarify with the campuses, or gauge success with articulated goals.

At the district level, the researcher reviewed the district improvement plans from the past three years, focusing on data included in the annual needs assessment of the district and goals for the campuses. The district improvement plans were reviewed to determine pertinent goals and areas of focus related to the implementation of student formative assessment, often referred to as assessment for learning. At the campus level, the assessment for learning, or formative assessment, initiatives from campus improvement plan archives were collected and reviewed. Particular attention was paid to data related to training, planning, of strategies related to the implementation of formative assessment.

Field Notes and Memos

As qualitative research is conducted, the regular use of field notes and memos is a

common practice as the researcher collects data (Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2011). In an effort to continuously provide descriptive details throughout the data collection process, the researcher compiled thoughts and reflections through field notes and memos.

Data Collection Process

In order to gain the necessary levels of clearance to conduct this research, the researcher followed several approval processes with specific steps and requirements prior to collecting data for the study. Approval was sought from the Institutional Review Board from the University of Texas at Austin, the participating school district, and from the individual campuses and participants. After securing the appropriate permissions necessary to conduct the study, data collection proceeded according to the procedures outlined below.

Institutional Approval

Upon the approval of this study by the treatise committee, the researcher applied for and obtained approval to conduct this study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas at Austin. IRB documents for informed consent were created for the district, campuses, and individual participants. All supplemental documents were included in the application for IRB approval. This study received expedited approval due to the minimal risk for human subject participants.

School District

The proposed study was conducted within a purposefully selected school district and solicited the perceptions of three principals and thirteen teacher participants. A letter explaining the study and the pertinent request was submitted to the district superintendent, upon approval by the IRB committee. Following approval from the IRB,

the researcher communicated with the selected district and obtained superintendent approval to participate. Additionally, through collaboration with the superintendent's designee, the researcher developed a list of the three qualified campuses with principals and teachers who were willing and able to participate based upon the predetermined criteria.

Campuses & Participants

The researcher contacted participating principals after the approval by both the IRB and district. The district official informed the researcher of campuses that met the criteria. The researcher contacted each principal to schedule a mutually agreeable date to interview each principal and conduct the teacher focus group at each of the three campuses, separately. The researcher invited qualified teachers at each grade level through the purposefully selected campus principal. The principal determined who met the criteria and was willing to participate in the study. The researcher secured meeting dates and scheduled appointments with qualifying faculty members.

Timeline

All data collection were collected during the month of May and early summer of 2013. Upon receiving approval from the IRB and the school district, the researcher immediately scheduled focus group sessions and interviews at each campus. Participation was solicited from specific campuses based upon referral from the superintendent’s designee after ensuring the campuses met criteria for inclusion in the study. A review of documents continued through the early summer. Participant teachers were gathered in focus group sessions scheduled at each campus. Individual principal interviews were completed independently from and prior to the teacher focus group

sessions.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is completed through a process of coding (Yin, 2011). The process for data analysis in this study was guided by the Yin (2011) framework for qualitative coding, which included a five-phase cycle of "(a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding" (p. 177). Using this five-phase cycle, data were compiled and analyzed using open and axial coding techniques.

Pattern coding was employed to group first-level, *open codes* into themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data were sorted into groups that resulted in the development of coding categories, or themes. After the categories were saturated, the researcher reviewed the coding process by re-analyzing each piece of coded data and confirming the themes and categories. As the data was categorized into sorted groups, additional *axial codes* were developed as information was compiled into chunks (Yin, 2011). The information was compared throughout the cases studied for additional processing and grouping of reoccurring themes and patterns within the data (Yin, 2011). After following the initial cycle, patterns emerged and the researcher was able to discern findings based upon the selected categories and interpretations of data compiled from focus group and interview transcripts. Notes and memos were also compiled and reviewed throughout the process. A review of documents was conducted to elucidate and clarify themes.

Triangulation of Data

Three sources of information that confirm a conclusion constitute triangulation of data (Willis et al., 2007). The various sources of data included transcribed principal

interviews, transcribed teacher focus groups, field notes and memos, and a review of documents. In addition to methodological triangulation, the researcher also triangulated the participant sources of data by selecting three campuses and participants from each campus. Teacher focus groups also included representatives from third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers from each of the three campuses. Steps to ensure the triangulation of data were taken to increase the reliability of the study findings and conclusions (Willis et al., 2007).

Reliability and Credibility of the Research

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the credibility of the research lies within the instrument of data collection.

> In qualitative research, issues of instrument validity and reliability rely largely on the skills of the researcher. … Thus you need to ask, about yourself and your colleagues, how valid and reliable is this person likely to be as an information-gathering instrument. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 38)

Miles and Huberman (1994) offer some considerations for reliability and credibility including familiarity with the phenomenon, setting, strong conceptual interests, a multidisciplinary approach, and good investigative skills. To that effect, the researcher employed several strategies to increase the reliability and credibility of the study findings.

The researcher conducted the focus group, interviews, and document review through a practitioner's lens. While the study and understanding of themes and processes was strengthened by the researchers' experience with the implementation of student formative assessment, the process of memoing was used to make notes of any potential

researcher bias to ensure that findings were not affected.

Intentional efforts to increase reliability were employed to avoid contamination of the participant's perception, as well. Individualized interviews with each administrator were conducted while teachers were able to share amongst peers through focus groups. The separation of the administrator from the supervised teachers allowed for minimized conflicts of interest. The intentional separation of teachers supported their ability to freely share experiences without their administrator present. Additionally, principals were allowed to speak in the absence of their supervised employees.

Summary

This chapter described the study's methodology and design, a description of the sampling criteria, and procedures for data collection. A qualitative methodology was selected to best determine the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers, as perceived by the teachers and campus principal. A description of the steps taken to increase the reliability of the study findings was discussed, as well. Chapter Four will discuss study participants, provide descriptive explanations, and present the findings resulting from the data collected in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Context and Findings

Chapter Three described the research methodology selected for this study. The researcher took great care to design a study that would most adequately gather perceptions related to teacher technical and professional socialization needs during the planning and implementation of campus-wide student formative assessment. Chapter Four provides an overview of both the district and campus contexts and a detailed explanation of the research findings. In an effort to ensure confidentiality, names or references to specific individuals and institutions were removed. Furthermore, due to the limited number of campuses from one school district, identifying information was masked to prevent the identification of an individual and/or campus through deductive disclosure. However, the researcher only modified or omitted information that might identify a specific individual, but would not impact the overall trustworthiness of the study findings.

The purpose of this study was to explore how principals addressed both the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Bolman & Deal, 2008, Heath & Heath, 2010; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011, Wiliam, 2010). The following questions guided the study:

1. What do teachers perceive to be their technical and professional socialization needs experienced during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment and how are these met?

2. What are the school principals' perceptions of how they address the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment?

Study Context

One of the greatest strengths of qualitative research is that it allows the researcher to contextualize the study by providing thick, rich descriptions for the readers (Merriam, 2002). Descriptions of the participant school district and campuses provide insight into the study and help to increase the transferability of the findings. Additionally, contextual information allows readers to develop an in-depth understanding of the conditions in which the participant experiences occurred.

School District

The mid-size school district in Texas selected for this study celebrated a milestone anniversary in 2006 with a student population of just over 13,000 students. The district boundaries span several hundred square miles and cross into several counties. In 2006, the district was made up of only thirteen campuses. Over the next seven years, the student enrollment would grow by 40%, bringing the current number of students served at more than twenty campuses to just over 18,000 students at the time of this study. The district has achieved a "Recognized" accountability rating from the Texas Education Agency for the last available three years that ratings were awarded. The superintendent was recently hired due to his previous experience successfully leading another innovative, fast-growth district. Additionally, in order to meet the demands of a growing district, a number of executive-level administrative positions were added to the school district in the months before this research was conducted. To educate the over 18,000

students, the district currently operates over fifteen elementary schools and nine secondary campuses, including one school of choice.

The district is demographically diverse, consisting of a 35% Hispanic, 58.5% White, and 2.2% African American student population. The remaining 1.7 % of the student population is made up of students from Asian, Pacific Islander, or multi-race descent. Just over 20% of students in the district meet the state definition for at-risk. Limited English Proficient (LEP) students represent 5% of the total student enrollment. The smallest elementary has 230 students compared to the largest elementary campus, which hosts over 675 students. The district employs over 2,300 staff members.

Site Descriptions

Using purposive sampling, a total of three elementary campuses were included in the study. To ensure the confidentiality of responses, the campuses are referred to as Campus A, B, and C. The study participants' ranges of experience and the most recently awarded state accountability rating for each campus are reported in *Figure 3*. Campus special populations and related special programs are reported on *Figure 4*. Student ethnic demographics are reported in *Figure 5*.

Site	Number of Teacher Participants	Range Experience of Teacher Participants	Student Enrollment (2012-2013)	State Accountability Rating (2010-2011)
Campus A	4	15-23 years	678	Recognized
Campus B	3	10-12 years	598	Exemplary
Campus C	6	8-16 years	592	Recognized

Figure 3. Site Participants and Accountability Ratings

Site	Percent Economically Disadvantaged	Percent Limited English Proficient (LEP)	Special Programs
Campus A	38.4%	27.1%	Two-Way Dual Language Program through 3rd grade adding one grade level per year; Special Education Inclusion and Resource
Campus B	12.3%	.5%	Spanish Immersion through 3rd grade adding one grade level per year; Special Education Resource and Inclusion
Campus C	52.3%	20.3%	Two-Way Dual Language through 3rd grade adding one grade level per year; Pre-K (English and Spanish)

Figure 4. Campus Special Populations and Related Special Programs, 2010-2011

Site	African American	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Two or more Races
Campus A	0.1%	50.1%	47.3%	0%	.7%	1.7%
Campus B	.3%	16.4%	80.5%	.2%	1.2%	1.4%
Campus C	2.1%	54%	42.9%	.2%	.4%	.4%

Figure 5. Student Ethnic Demographics, 2010-2011

Campus A. The campus enrollment is currently 685 students. Four years prior to this study, the campus lost ten teachers with the opening of a new elementary campus in a neighboring community. For the past four years, the campus has hosted a state required bilingual program for students who qualify through language testing as native Spanish speakers. There are thirty-three classroom teachers from kindergarten through third grade including two kindergarten bilingual teachers. The two-way dual language program currently serves ninety students. As a result of the program design, students who qualify for the program are from a broad area of the district, not necessarily within the Campus A attendance boundaries. Students whose home addresses would not ordinarily be assigned to this campus may attend if they qualify for and enroll in the English Language Learner (ELL) program. The principal explained that, although the

program meets the state requirements for English Language Learners (ELL), a percentage of English dominant students are also allowed to participate in the two-way program. In addition to the dual language program, the campus also hosts academic special education programs, serving students through an inclusion model of instruction and through resource classes.

Campus A customarily earns state ratings, which have fluctuated from year to year between the two highest, "Exemplary" and "Recognized". In the years that Campus A has not achieved an "Exemplary" rating, the campus earned a lower rating as a result of academically unacceptable scores within the campus' economically disadvantaged student population. The campus is designated as a federal Title I campus and qualifies for funding due to a 38% economically disadvantaged student population.

Campus B. The last time state accountability ratings were awarded, Campus B achieved the highest designation of an "Exemplary" rating. Enrollment at Campus B has fluctuated from between just over 600 to about 800 students. With a student population that is more than 80%, Campus B is not nearly as ethnically diverse as the other campuses in the study. Also, the campus is not a designated Title I campus since the amount of students who are economically disadvantaged does not meet federal criteria for inclusion in Title I. The campus has a Spanish immersion program for both English and Spanish speakers. There are 28 classrooms with only one per grade level designated for Spanish immersion (1st through 3rd grade only, adding the following grade level each year through 5^{th} grade).

Campus C. The last time the Texas Education Agency awarded accountability ratings, Campus C earned a "Recognized" accountability rating. The campus has a

student enrollment of just fewer than 600 students and hosts a two-way dual language program through third grade, adding a grade level each year. Students selected to participate in this language program are selected through a lottery system, though priority selection is afforded to students who have siblings in the program. There are two pre-kindergarten classrooms: one where students receive instruction in English and a second where students receive instruction in Spanish. Approximately 54% of the student enrollment is Hispanic. The campus has 52.3% of the student population qualify as economically disadvantaged, and thus qualifies for Title I.

Principals

The principals from each of the three purposefully selected campuses were interviewed for this study.

Campus A principal. The principal at Campus A had served in her position for the past eight years and has a total of seventeen years of experience as an educator. She earned a doctorate in education two years prior to this study. She added that she recently accepted a new position as a Kindergarten through 12th grade principal in a smaller district for the upcoming school year. The principal expressed her desire to obtain a superintendent position, adding that this desire motivated her to pursue this change in an effort to gain professional growth experiences. During her eight-year tenure, Campus A had seven assistant principals due to extenuating circumstances, such as promotions, personnel changes, and short-term assignments. Campus A has been in existence for eleven years and experienced the leadership of three principals. Prior to moving into the principalship, the principal at Campus A was an elementary school counselor for three years and an assistant principal for four years. She has worked in the district for the past

twelve years.

Campus B principal. At the time of this study, the leader at Campus B was completing her second year as the principal, but had also been at the school for several years as the assistant principal. She shared that her mentors taught her the importance of finding the balance between focusing on campus culture and student achievement. She lived just five miles from the school and considered it as both a joy and a challenge to have her family in the same community as her work. This principal stated that she works hard to hire effectively and to implement change efficiently, all while celebrating the successes of her teachers. She was raised in a small town about two hours away from the district.

Campus C principal. The Campus C principal reported that he was near the end of his career and had worked in education for almost 30 years. He had many years of experience in the district and was fortunate to maintain long-term relationships with his teachers. The day his interview was conducted, the state assessment scores were released to the campus in the afternoon. The office administrative assistant guided me to an open office to prepare for the study. Almost all the rooms in the front office were filled with groups of people reviewing what appeared to be test scores. As we walked down the hall, I met the principal and the teachers nearby began asking him about their scores. The principal expressed his frustration that someone had told the teachers the scores were in before he could personally speak with them. The same teachers returned about twenty minutes later to participate in the teacher focus group.

Teacher Participants

Focus group participants from Campus A consisted of four teachers. These

teachers had between fifteen and twenty-three years of experience, with most working in the district for approximately nine years. Three of the four teachers served as team leaders or provided additional leadership at the campus.

The three teacher participants from Campus B had between ten and twelve years of classroom teaching experience. One teacher had a degree in journalism, the second had a bachelor's of science with a minor in English, and the third has an elementary education degree. All three worked at Campus B for more than six years.

The six teachers from Campus C had mostly earned traditional elementary degrees and certifications; however, one had a bachelor's degree in finance. Another teacher was certified as a bilingual teacher in Spanish, and a third was a pre-med student as an undergrad and had completed master's degree in educational administration. Every teacher who participated from Campus C had between eight and sixteen years of experience.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to gain insight from teachers and leaders regarding their perceptions of the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment. Several themes related to the perceived needs of teachers emerged from the data. The technical needs themes resulting from an analysis of the data included: development of a campus-wide common terminology, participation in vertical teaming, and the maintenance of the support role of a campus instructional specialist. Themes related to the socialization needs of teachers included: reassurance from the principal regarding their new professional learning, gradual pace of the implementation of student formative

assessment, meaningful teacher-to-teacher interaction, open and transparent communication with the principal, and opportunities to participate in building cohesive grade-level teams.

Research Question One: What do teachers perceive to be their technical and socialization needs experienced during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment and how are these met?

Focus group sessions were conducted at three public school elementary campuses. A total of thirteen teacher representatives from third through fifth grade levels participated in the study. The focus groups ranged in size from three to six participants. All three sessions were conducted in May of 2013. The participants all represented state tested grade levels at the elementary school level. Coincidentally, the third and final focus groups received their student assessment results the same day as session.

Teachers' perceptions of technical needs. For the purpose of this study, technical needs are defined as the required definitions, manual or scientific skills, knowledge of a new strategy or process, and information required to implement an initiative (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In this case, the implementation of campus-wide formative assessment is the phenomenon of interest. The technical needs reported by the teachers who participated in the focus group sessions included: development of a campus-wide common terminology, participation in vertical teaming, and maintenance of the support role of a campus instructional specialist.

Development of campus-wide common terminology. Given the new technical knowledge required for the implementation of student formative assessment coupled with the rollout of the STAAR state exam, teachers were challenged to incorporate unknown

terminology to their planning and delivery of instruction. Teachers reported a need to share new terminology and determine collective campus-wide definitions for language associated with the implementation of student formative assessment. The participants indicated a need for all classrooms to work towards mutual definitions, especially in preparation for the new state STAAR assessment. Each of the three focus groups noted the challenge of cohesively utilizing the same language with both colleagues and students at each grade level.

One example of unknown terminology reported by teachers was the vocabulary knowledge required for a student to accurately answer the new state assessment test questions. Additionally, campus professional learning community efforts also necessitated that all teachers utilize the same language to collaborate and interact effectively in all aspects of the student formative assessment process. One teacher shared a strategy to support this need, "There have also been several book studies so that we all have a common language." (Focus Group C, 123). Another participant explained,

> I noticed with the new test, there's a lot of the different terminology in the testing that the students are going to take, you have to use those terminology words within the classroom. (Focus Group A, 64-66)

Teachers shared the need for a mutual understanding of new terminology, which was supported by an informal campus teacher leader who reminded faculty of the school-wide definition of formative and summative assessment at the beginning of each academic year. Teachers explained that these informal teacher leaders revisit expected vocabulary with each grade-level team at the beginning of the school year to ensure all classroom teachers possess common definitions of the terminology, especially as it

pertains to the new state assessment.

> And like [another teacher] mentioned, at the beginning of the year, we went over again what was formative, what Mr. No-Name Man (joking regarding anonymity) said, and making sure that everybody was on the same page at the beginning of the year as to what formative was and what summative was. [We did this] to make sure everybody was clear on that…at the beginning of the year. (Focus Group C, 119-122)

In addition to campus-wide definitions, teachers also expressed the need to plan for instruction with all grade levels during the implementation of student formative assessments. Since the campus shared responsibility for instruction, participants reported a need to collaborate with teachers and grade levels.

Participation in vertical teaming. Organizing teachers across levels emerged as a teacher need. Teachers indicated that communication with all teachers from kindergarten through fifth grade was necessary. Instead of only collaborating with grade level team teachers, they identified vertical teaming as a required technical support for campus-wide student academic achievement efficacy. Teachers worked with their own and other grade-level teams to review data and make related instructional adjustments for students. Campus improvement plans indicated there were formal campus initiatives to conduct vertical teaming. When asked to explain their use of "vertical" and "horizontal" terms mentioned during the focus group, the following was reported,

> Meeting with our grade level and planning out what we'll do for the week, and also we've had several meetings where we've met with grade levels below and grade levels above to look at the standards that we need to be teaching. (Focus

Group C, 62-64)

Teachers asserted this need for vertical teaming to engage with student data for the purpose of improvement.

> …We're able to tell the grade level below [us] where [students are] coming in a little weak [so] that maybe they can help us here, and the grade level above us is able to tell us, 'Here's a place where you might be able to help us out...' (Focus Group C, 65-67)

Teachers explained their need for vertical teaming was to collaborate and support effective instructional practices and adjustments at both the sending and receiving grade levels. They noted that communication regarding students with previous teachers as necessary to ensure successful individualized efforts. Vertical teaming allows for a lot of interaction and the creation of a cohesive team with teachers from all grade levels.

> We're not just 3rd grade and 4th grade and 5th grade, we do interact as a school between the grade levels, which makes it easier to get support especially if you're having trouble with something and you can talk to people in 2nd grade and ask them, 'You had this student last year, what can I do that you know of to help them?' [It helps] not [to] just start all over again from scratch [every year]. (Focus Group C, 225-229)

Teachers reported an appreciation that the principal recognized the need to provide time for vertical teaming.

> I think [the principal] built that culture in our school because he [allowed] us to do vertical stuff, which allowed us to not stay in our grade levels. Because we had meetings where we had to work vertically with all grade levels, that made us

> get to know those people better, which made it easier for us to go to them and talk to them about students... (Focus Group C, 230-233)

Teachers also referenced that for teachers taking the time to participate in vertical teams, an additional human resource found in substitutes was required to achieve the needed campus-wide sharing amongst teachers. These substitutes were enlisted to teach the subject area leader's class to allow that teacher time for collaboration across grade levels, thus providing vertical teaming to support the use of formative assessment data. One example of these planned interactions involved a need to enhance school science instruction at every grade level. One participant stated,

> He [the principal] gets a sub for my class and I go to each grade level and talk to whoever teaches science, and try to give them insight of what they're supposed to teach according to that standard. (Focus Group C, 105-106)

These teachers also indicated substitutes were needed to allow for lower and upper grade levels to observe each other's classrooms. One participant added,

> [The principal has] even provided subs for the lower grade levels to come and observe teaching techniques so they can start implementing them, also, and start formative assessments for the lower grade levels. (Focus Group C, 116-118)

Teachers suggested a need for this substitute time to share performance data and to clarify expectations across the various grade levels.

Classroom teachers acknowledged the responsibility of ensuring instructional delivery of the state and district curriculum, not only in their assigned grade-level team, but also in collaboration with their peers from upper and lower grade levels on the campus. Another teacher shared,

> …It kind of emphasizes to us that we just can't do what teachers like …the 'fun' things for science. There are things that the kids need to know. We need to build background knowledge before they get into 5th grade. (Focus Group C, 107-109)

The teachers stated that the principal's support to provide this fundamental sharing time is vital. They shared that students benefit from improved instruction as a result of having time that is structured to discuss how to improve instruction through data review with peers at different grade levels.

> And [the principal has] provided the vertical time, that [another teacher] talked about…That's helped me in math to know where my kids need to go for 4th grade so I can get them better prepared. It's helped us get 2nd grade better prepared for their kids to come to us because we can tell them, 'Hey, they're lacking with their 2-digit addition' and 'Here's how we're teaching it, maybe you could work on it this way.' So [the principal] provides us a lot of social time to be able to talk about how to help our kids. (Focus Group C, 110-115)

Although teachers indicated the importance of support from their teacher peers, they also shared a need for additional specialized guidance with aspects of formative assessment and student intervention.

Maintenance of the support role of a campus instructional specialist. The contributions of teachers with specialized training emerged from the data as an important technical need. The document review of the campus improvement plans all indicated the intentional use of a campus instructional specialist. According to teachers, the support from a campus instructional specialist was essential to address specific classroom challenges, and therefore, teacher tailored assistance became essential. Teachers credit

the instructional specialists as contributing to the construction of common assessments and jointly selecting and employing the subsequent student interventions identified from the data analysis.

> We do get a lot of support from our [instructional specialists], as far as helping us with assessments and coming up with ideas for formative assessments, and just to help us with students that are struggling, period. So we do get a lot of support there. [There are] an [instructional specialist], a reading specialist, and a math specialist on-campus. (Focus Group C, 198-201)

Teachers noted that the campus instructional specialists are also needed to support instructional practices for students in need of intervention. One participant noted, "…They [instructional specialists] work with our low kids, but they also work with us [the teachers] to help us with how we can address those kids' needs in class. They do both" (Focus Group C, 202-203).

Participants caution that, although the instructional specialists provide faculty help, in order to be effective at meeting teacher needs, instructional specialists should not be involved in the appraisal or judgment of teacher work or performance.

> And I think that's very important because I hear of other campuses where their [instructional specialists]… are more in a superior position to the teacher. So instead of helping you out like an assistant, then they start telling you what to do and that brings you kind of down as a 'You don't trust me' kind of thing. So having that support, being equal or an assistant to the teacher is important, not making the teacher feel inferior. (Focus Group C, 204-209)

Teachers shared the need to be treated as an equal by the specialist. It was also

important that the instructional specialists were not there to serve as an evaluator, but were there to assist the teachers with creating content common assessments and brainstorming ideas and strategies for student interventions identified as needs by the data. Although teachers indicated their needs related to technical learning, they also suggested there were professional socialization needs experienced when interacting with their peers during the collaboration required during data analysis and planning.

Teachers' perceptions of professional socialization needs. Socialization needs are the emotional, affective needs that are fulfilled by interacting with others in a structured, supported environment in order to learn the norms, skills, and behaviors needed for new learning or change (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heath & Heath, 2010; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011). During the implementation of student formative assessment, teachers experienced professional socialization needs as a result of increased expectations for collaboration. Teachers also reported socialization needs that included emotional considerations for teachers during a change of practice. These socialization needs included: reassurance from the principal with new professional learning, a gradual pace of implementation for the student formative assessment initiative, meaningful teacher-to-teacher interaction, open and transparent communication with the principal, and opportunities to participate in building cohesive grade-level teams.

Reassurance from the principal with new professional learning. According to teachers, encouragement was highlighted as a critical need. Teachers indicated struggling with feelings of insecurity with their instructional performance during the early stages of student formative assessment. A need for positive feedback from the principal surfaced even among the more experienced teachers who shared fears of

inadequacy during initial efforts. They reported the implementation of formative assessment resulted in feelings of uncertainty with student achievement since many of these processes were unknown practices. A teacher shared,

> I think, too, this year we've really been vocal about needing more support like 'You're doing a good job.' …Because we really feel like [we're] working so hard and you don't know if it's going to get them [the students] where they need to be. So that too. 'You're doing [well], you're trying, and I see that you're trying different things.' …stuff like that. As a teacher, that's really needed just because when you don't have that, you start questioning everything you're doing. (Focus Group A, 102-107)

Another teacher added that encouragement by verbal and non-verbal cues from the principal such as a simple "thumbs up" was one way to provide reassurance. "I appreciate... you're really doing a good job" aided in providing reassurance with the new implementation. Teachers noted some of their greatest supports were "each other" by reminding one another of their strengths. They emphasized venting, laughing and reassuring each other were imperative to the team's success.

A gradual pace of implementation for the student formative assessment initiative. A progressive process of steps completed one at a time to guarantee successful introduction and implementation of student formative assessment emerged as an essential need. Teachers indicated that principals should intentionally consider small steps with new learning. In addition, teachers explained that, although they may have received technical training for the implementation of student formative assessment, they would have preferred to focus on less change(s) with more time to increase their self-efficacy in

delivering new instructional practices. A teacher added, "Too many changes all at once. If they had implemented them slowly, it would have been received better." (Focus Group A, 242-243) Another group participant explained,

> When you've been in education for a while do you see things come and go and things changing all the time, and it takes a while for teachers to integrate that change, and you need that support, that encouragement along the way – providing training and encouragement that way. (Focus Group A, 119-122)

Teachers shared that meeting their socialization needs was paramount, not only for building confidence, but for encouraging discussions with a peers about strategies to meet the various needs of students.

Meaningful teacher-to-teacher interaction. According to teachers, a positive face to face exchange of knowledge and feelings is needed in order to effectively address mutual instruction related concerns. Teachers also indicated that the most effective means of brainstorming strategies to meet students' needs involved reflections with grade-level or content area peers who faced similar frustrations and challenges associated with figuring out how to best meet students' needs. Participants noted that the ability to discuss data and interact with others was a professional socialization need. Another teacher explained to the others in the focus group that,

> If I'm understanding this right, technical [needs are] like [when] we need to have the background understanding of how to make/do formative assessment- that's the technical part of it. Then, the socialization is being able to have the time to actually talk to each other and work it through with each other and figure out how we're going to implement [an initiative], maybe. (Focus Group C, 84-88)

Teachers reported an additional socialization need was the opportunity to discuss performance data with other educators in an effort to find new ways of meeting student learning needs. Such interactions were noted as requirement to allow for more than one teacher's instructional repertoire. These data-based interactions and professional learning community expectations were listed in the campus improvement plans. Additionally, there were district initiatives for the use of data.

> And the fact that once you get the data you need somebody to run it by and talk and say 'look', cause if it was just you looking at the data and you've been teaching the same way the whole time then I don't know that you'll automatically come up with a new way to explain something to somebody, but maybe somebody else talking to you can say... I don't know if THAT's socialization. (Focus Group C, 89- 93)

Teacher interaction was highlighted as a needed support, especially with new initiatives. "Everybody had to do it together, so we all counted on one another just to know how to fill out that information" (Focus Group A, 128-129).

Open and transparent communication with the principal. Transparent and candid interchange of information, thoughts, opinions and insights between teachers and principals emerged as a social need. According to the teachers, clear communication with the principal, including specific feedback and contextual considerations may alleviate resultant difficulties or obstacles to the implementation of student formative assessment.

Teachers indicated their experiences and difficulties needed to be brought to the attention of the school district through transparent communication with the principal.

Teachers asserted that some of the obstacles associated with the implementation of student formative assessment tend to be caused by the district office. As a teacher observed,

> The district office. Again, I go back to that micro-managing thing. Here at this campus, we're empowered and trusted to do our job. If we don't do our job, we get a talking to, or whatever, but for the most part if we do our jobs then we're trusted, and it seems like [the] district, a lot of times, some of the things they implement or…they do with your students in your classroom, you have to make a blanket rule for everybody because there was one person who messed up. So when that blanket rule comes over, it makes you feel like 'I do my job, I do it well, why are you making me do this? It's not my fault for this or that.' So that's what I mean. Sometimes it feels like the district doesn't trust you as an individual. Because they don't know you as well as your principal does, so that's where you need support from your principal, to stand up for you. That's what I mean. [Laughter] (Focus Group C, 181-191)

In addition, the teachers indicated that at times the campus principal is able to clarify district expectations for teachers in a way that is more sensitive to their needs. By having opportunities to communicate with the principal, teachers are able to provide feedback through their leader. The teachers viewed the principal as an important advocate to due to their close relationship and communication at the campus level.

> Or if [a test is] coming down from the main office, where you have the people that are in charge of ELA or math and they're the ones sending that information. Sometimes they'll send stuff like, that's not even in our next six weeks that we're

> suppose[d] to teach, so why is this on the test. There's those kinds of things will give feedback to your principals and the principals will give feedback when they go to the main office, and they'll like 'ohhh.' So there's a communication breakdown there sometimes. Cause that can get you real upset when you've got to cover stuff and you're like 'that wasn't even supposed to be tested this time.' (Focus Group A, 191-197)

According to the data, teachers' communication with their principal extended beyond providing feedback regarding district expectations and initiatives. Teachers indicated that they could also have input into the principal's decision when hiring grade-level teammates to ensure new teachers bring a compatible instructional philosophy.

Opportunities to participate in building cohesive grade-level teams. Creating solid and interconnected groups of teachers to form a unified team emerged as a teacher social need. According to the teachers, the ongoing interactions of a cohesive grade level team facilitates effective student formative assessment practices. In addition, teachers highlighted the importance of having opportunities to participate in building a cohesive, effective grade-level team, which begins with the hiring process. Participants reported the importance of providing feedback to ensure the selection of teammates who are a "fit" for that particular team. In order to achieve and sustain higher levels of student achievement, teachers noted the importance of having a cohesive team comprised of strong teachers, affording them the ability to work interdependently with the other teachers on their team.

Teachers also reported that effective planning, learning curriculum content, and creating a shared sense of responsibility for student achievement are easier to achieve as a

close-knit team.

> Also being part of a good cohesive team, cause I know that was part of the big plus for me this year with teaching math first year, and I relied on them a lot. So just being able to get help from your team members is important. (Focus group C, 210-212)

Teachers shared that the ability to work as a team is vital for successful instructional planning since all members must work closely to follow the same curriculum.

> We actually plan together so all of our weekly plans are the same. It's helpful not just when you're not sure of what you are doing, it's also helpful when substitutes are on your grade level cause they can walk over and say 'what am I doing?' cause everyone is pretty much doing the same thing and they can help. So it makes it very helpful in many ways. (Focus Group C, 216-220)

Another teacher described cohesiveness as mutual respect for one another and having a relationship of shared ownership for every student on the grade level.

> I think also our cohesive team all shares with each other and the kids are all of ours in third grade. They're self-contained and yet they are my kids and her kids, and we care about them all. We just all work well together. A lot of support. And we respect the people that we work with. (Focus Group C, 221-224)

Participants observed that the principal was essential to promoting cohesive teams through careful hiring and by considering attributes that may not be listed on a resume. Teachers suggested intentional processes for matching the teammates by personality to support building these high performing teams. Since student formative assessment

requires close collaboration, teachers reported that they require mutual trust with their grade-level peers, which they suggested should be a strong consideration during the hiring process.

> A lot of stuff that we've talked about here has to do with a good team, not just one good teacher next to another good teacher. The good teachers have to be able to get along with each other and respect each other and trust each other. I think one reason [the principal] has had good luck with that, a) because of her personality; she knows how to pick 'em, plus we've gone through three different schools, a lot of us, and basically moving and separating the schools, and she has taken the teachers she wants to each school. So we've filtered out…[laughter]…Hey, it's true, and so everyone gets along. On that note, obviously that helped out a little bit, going through three different schools with him, but from a principal's point of view, and it's difficult, but they need to focus more on during the hiring process – and this is fresh on my mind cause we just went through [the process of hiring new staff members]…[it] is [important] not just to rely on a piece of paper, on a resume, on these questions that we ask…Sometimes during interviews, because I believe there has to be a connection, the teachers have to get along with each other. So, even if somebody has an awesome resume, it doesn't mean necessarily [that] they should be on [the] staff [be]cause if they don't get along with their team, it's not going to be productive at all. I think that needs to be considered more during the hiring process more than these formative questions that we give sometimes, which anybody can answer correctly, using common sense, but does that really tell us how their personality is... (Focus Group C, 237-254)

Teachers shared they should be a part of the hiring process to aid in the selection a good "fit" for the team. The participants also hinted that including team members of the particular grade level in the interview might help them determine their ability to "feed off" of other people. One teacher added,

> And [the principal] actually does that per grade level. We [are] actually part of a committee at that point; it's not one committee. She puts together a 3rd grade committee, if she needs to hire a 3rd grade teacher. She puts together a 4th grade or 5th grade, and we teachers help in that hiring process. So we do get to pick someone who would be a cohesive team member. (Focus Group C, 256-259)

Another teacher indicated that a collaborative personality and philosophy was needed and should be considered during the hiring process.

> We were talking about that at one of our meetings. If I had gone through that same process that we just [conducted with a potential teacher]…I never would have been hired. I would have said the wrong thing [be]cause I'm not good at that kind of assessment; but given my personality, I can feed off of other people and grow off of other people and get along with other people to where I can be a much better teacher because of the people around me. (Focus Group C, 256-264)

The campus teacher focus groups shared their perceived professional technical and socialization needs experienced during the implementation of student formative assessment. They added that the campus principal has addressed some of these needs.

Research Question Two: What are the school principals' perceptions of how they address the professional technical and socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment?

Principals' perceptions of how they addressed teacher professional technical and socialization needs appeared to be consistent with the needs reported by teachers. These included: facilitating vertical teaming, providing a campus instructional specialist, embedding time for collaborative professional development, and setting clear expectations for implementation.

Additionally, principals shared that they address teacher professional socialization needs through facilitating the building of cohesive grade-level teams, providing reassurance with new implementation, promoting open and transparent communication with teachers, promoting a gradual implementation pace, and facilitating meaningful teacher-to-teacher interactions to improve student learning.

Technical supports from the principal. Principals reported having provided several mechanisms to support the technical needs of teacher. One principal noted,

> … the technical part was easier to meet; we practiced it, we showed that it's easy. That's the 'go online', 'here, this is how you do it'... (Principal B, 29-31)

Principals listed supports as the facilitation of vertical teaming, the provision of instructional specialists, embedding time for collaborative professional development, and providing clear expectations for implementation outcomes.

Facilitating vertical teaming. Principals not only provided time for teachers to analyze data and plan for instruction with their grade-levels teams, they also facilitated campus-wide collaboration. Principals noted they addressed teacher technical needs

through the facilitation of teachers' participation in campus-wide vertical teams during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment. Principals claimed to support teacher needs through the facilitation of vertical team meeting discussions. These expectations were also mentioned in the campus improvement plans. All three principals addressed the importance of vertical teaming and encouraging collaboration.

> When they can sit down…they're in a vertical alignment meeting…it's amazing to listen to teachers talk from different grade levels…'oh yeah, I did that,' 'well, let's take it down to kindergarten and how can we do it that way.' (Principal C, 190-192)

The principals reported that they provided structures of time for informal teacher leaders to communicate with all teachers on the campus. Principal C described the school's vertical collaboration with the campus 5th grade science teacher.

> …We look at the curriculum from kinder through 5th grade by subject area and look at how it spirals. Like the 5th grade – I take science because not everybody tests science until 5th grade. We have one science teacher and what he does is meet with every grade level four times a year – we get him a sub – and he meets with them and they talk about how they can spiral their activities from grade level to grade level so that it meets the needs of the 5th grade students when he's teaching. They come with that background knowledge. (Principal C, 36-41)

One teacher agreed that the principal already supported the need for vertical teaming.

> He provides time for [another teacher], who teaches 5th grade science, to come down and talk to the grade levels about, and this is what the new standards are

saying, ‘this is what you really need to be focusing on.’ Yes, the kids like to do the life cycle of a butterfly, but they need to learn erosion and other things as well. (Focus Group C, 101-104)

Principal B added that her support for vertical teaming involved the creation of a productive format for teachers to provide information about student achievement to lower grade-level peers. She shared,

> I will say we have improved with our vertical teams; they have more of a format to them – what is lacking from one grade to the next and they’re able to not make it like ‘well, y’all aren’t teaching.’ At first it was ‘well, if you all would just teach this more.’ It was more accusatory, and I noticed this year it was more…I’ve seen a lot more congratulating going on in them, and a lot more ‘you all must have taught this really well.’ They’re just becoming more cohesive. (Principal B, 87-93)

Principal B also noted that teachers were given the opportunity to visit a vertical teaming model at another campus to support this process. She added,

> The first year it was very awkward [be]cause the vertical teams don’t seem to know each other, obviously, as the horizontal teams, but year two has been much better about not making it so much of a ‘blaming’ someone for what they’re doing. But I don’t think they know exactly what a very fluid PLC looks like. I know other campuses have taken their teachers to another school to watch and I think that made a big difference. (Principal B, 93-98)

In an effort to minimize potential negative outcomes, Principal C suggested he supported teachers in their vertical teaming through expectations for setting norms and

reflections throughout the process.

> So it was a lot of discussion, setting norms for groups, because they're in planning groups, showing them what I wanted from their groups. (Principal C, 62-64)

Another principal utilized setting norms as an intentional process to prevent some of the potential initial social discomforts with the new formative assessment data collaboration. The process of setting norms allowed for teachers to consider expectations of each other during the sharing process. Although classroom teachers benefitted from their collaboration with one another, principals also indicated a need to support teacher content knowledge and student academic interventions through the provision of a campus instructional specialist.

Providing a campus instructional specialist. In addition to promoting collaboration across grade levels, principals also provide a campus instructional specialist as a technical support to assist teachers with curriculum content and student interventions. Principals communicated that their teachers relied heavily on these informal leaders for technical assistance. The specialists are highly trained in instructional practices and are able to work with teachers in the classroom on a daily basis as well as conduct needed student interventions. Their positions were also found in the campus improvement plans to support teachers and student interventions.

> Another level of support that exists at our school [is the existence of] campus intervention teachers. Those teachers are not seen as supervisors or evaluators but rather as professional staff members who can provide additional support from outside the classroom to intervene in cases that students need it, and that can also serve in that roll of being a professional coach of sorts. It's not official in their

job description, as such, but the reading intervention campus teacher and the math campus intervention teacher are considered to be very skilled and knowledgeable resources for teachers, so they do serve that roll as well. (Principal A, 84-90)

All principals reported that to ensure teacher development they provide a campus instructional specialist. Instructional specialists perform a supportive role and assist teachers with new learning. One principal explained,

> I try to do is take care of all the logistics of everything, so they don't have to worry about that, and I'm very organized and very planned. So there [are] agendas. They all know what they're going to do ahead of time and they're always provided with materials. My CITs are always there to assist them, so that takes care of the professional technical part. They've got whatever materials, and if they don't have them I'll do whatever I can to buy them. (Principal C, 118-123)

In addition to assistance from campus instructional specialists, it is essential to provide structures for teacher development in order to acquire the technical knowledge required for implementing student formative assessment practices.

Embedding time for collaborative professional development. Principals indicated that an intentional and carefully crafted teacher professional development process was a vital support for addressing the technical needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessments. Principal A noted the importance of such a support by adding,

> To have a framework in mind for professional development in the direction that you're going to grow is very important, and it's been this year that we've increased our frequency at which we are coming together to talk about these

technical aspects of our instruction. (Principal A, 43-45)

Principals stated that using formative student achievement data became a focus for planning teacher professional development activities. The use of regular assessment data was now utilized to determine the areas of focus for professional faculty training. Principal A stated that the ongoing emphasis for teacher development shifted to identifying needs revealed by analyzing student data.

> We would determine the topics of our staff meetings and our professional development based upon our students' needs. (Principal A, 15-17)

Another aspect of professional development involved the use of technology. Campuses reported technology initiatives aligned with district improvement goals noted through the document review of plans. In an effort to align classroom innovation with content instruction, one principal facilitated the exchange of videos to support school-wide professional learning. Principal C added,

> Yeah. Teachers meet…last year we did a lot of K-3 work and we did 3-5 in reading, writing, and math. We started a writing initiative here on campus that was vertical, and every grade level contributed a video on, for instance, first grade was doing nouns so they made a video for the announcements on nouns that went school-wide. Every grade level contributed something they were able to work on with writing and by the upper grade levels they were able to put all that together. (43-48)

Principal C also expressed that professional development is an excellent mechanism to explain the purpose for the implementation and ultimately provides foundational understanding of student formative assessment initiative. He also explained

that professional development which supports teacher self-directed pursuits allows for shared ownership.

> [Teachers] not understanding what the end product would be [bad]. When people don't understand, they *resist*. So you really have to be clear about what the purpose of your *professional development*, and even your assessment, what is the purpose of that form of assessment that you're using. It has to be very clear, and sometimes we assume too much in that they really don't know. That's the experience I had when I got to [a previous elementary campus]. They just wanted to be told what to do. So then it all became me, and that wasn't working. So then you start getting teachers to…you try to turn them around and make them leaders that believe in themselves and then leaders within their grade-level and sometimes within the campus. Then you start giving them license to start making, calling some shots or doing some things, like experimenting with some things. Sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't. (Principal C, 163-172)

Once teacher-learning needs were addressed through a collaborative data-based professional development framework, clarification of expectations became necessary to ensure improved practice.

Setting clear expectations for implementation. All three principals referred to methods of accountability to support the integration of best practices. The principals clarified expectations for technical learning and selected methods to collect evidence of effective implementation.

> Because their plans are posted, and because I'm in their rooms a lot, I know what's going on, but there was an accountability piece... (Principal C, 62-64)

Principal B stressed the importance of providing clear, consistent expectations for initial compliance with the eventual goal of shared teacher ownership. She explained,

> Sometimes it's hard to get them to see the purpose they do. When I gave them the first data analysis sheet I said, 'Okay, we're [going to] meet on this date, you need to analyze your data, I'm [going to] talk to you about it.' I got the '[heavy sigh] Oh gosh, we've got so much to do.' Then they realized [that] I'm not going away, it's not going away, this is what everything ties to. To me, it's one of the most important pieces…getting them on-board with it. (108-113)

Collaborative reflective discussion was another means to clarify expectations related to accountability. Teachers were expected to adjust their implementation of student formative assessment practices through their collective reflection using achievement data with both their teams and the principal. Principal A shared,

> I believe [success] comes from visiting the classroom and talking about those visits, taking a look at the data together as a grade-level team with administrators or also encouraging at times grade levels to discuss the data on their own. Sometimes if an administrator takes a step out from that, it can encourage leadership to emerge on the grade-level team and can also make teachers feel more responsible for student performance on fine-tuning their instruction. (25-40)

Principals routinely address the technical needs of teachers by requiring participation in data-based professional development. In addition to bolster success, principals also addressed affective teacher needs by providing opportunities for teachers to interact with one another.

Socialization supports from the principal. Principals indicated their support for teachers extended beyond technical information and also included considerations for their professional socialization needs during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment. They reported meeting teacher socialization needs by facilitating the building of cohesive grade level teams, providing reassurance with new implementation, promoting open and transparent communication with teachers, promoting a gradual implementation pace, and facilitating meaningful teacher-to-teacher interactions to improve student learning.

Although technical knowledge is imperative for the implementation of student formative assessment, all principals noted the challenge to support the professional socialization needs of teachers associated with new processes. As a principal observed,

> [Be]cause it's really easy to explain technical needs, telling them what to teach – here's how to do it, here [are] all the ways [to do it]. The technical piece is easy to give it to them. The socializing takes relationships being built, and that's the complicated part; that's getting the right people together [and] the right leaders together. (Principal B, 111-115)

Facilitating the building of cohesive grade-level teams. Principals discussed the importance of facilitating the building of cohesive grade-level teams through intentional and collaborative placement of teachers. They reported that teachers are placed into a team based upon their ability to meet students' needs for that particular grade level.

> I think that as much as an administrator is able, the more you can keep teams cohesive, to keep members of the team somewhat the same from year-to-year, that can be a benefit to the teachers because… I don't know that that's the way grade-

level teams should be determined, while it's fresh on my mind, cause we're working through this for next year right now, but my perception is that teachers believe that when there is stability on the grade level then they can work together as a cohesive unit. As an administrator, my perspective of that is that's an added bonus but that teams should be constructed based upon who's most able to meet students' needs at those particular grade levels. (Principal A, 99-107)

Principal C added that the need to match teacher personalities to ensure that individuals can contribute and feel comfortable during the share and exchange of formative assessment practices within a particular grade-level team. Additionally, he added that the ability to protect continuity of team members when possible, allows for more team cohesiveness. He explained,

> You have an idea of what you want, as a leader on a campus, and you know the personalities – I've been with a lot of these people for a long time – so you know the personalities and who they'll get along with, and what personality won't fit into that grade level. You don't always have control over that, so you have to be very careful when you have openings or when you move people around, that you move those people into a team that is either more like them, so they feel comfortable and contribute, because you may have someone who doesn't like to speak up because they feel overwhelmed - some people are more direct than others. So you would hope to pair them up someplace where they could be an active contributor. A lot of times, in my case, it's just that they don't feel comfortable contributing, cause I use to have teachers who would just sit there and let people tell them what to do, and I'm just not that kind of...we just don't do

that, not anymore. So you just try to match people up to where they can contribute with their team, and I think I'm finally close. (Principal C, 80-92)

The principals indicated that teacher personality and philosophy are a consideration when hiring and that care should be taken to allow for equitable interactions and the potential for team continuity. Although a grade-level team is an important professional socialization support for elementary teachers, supports from the principal are still vital during the implementation of new learning.

Providing reassurance with new implementation. During the implementation of student formative assessments in every classroom, each of the principals asserted the need to reassure teacher while they are carrying out their newly learned practices. Principals also shared that it is especially crucial to recognize the efforts of all teachers and to express appreciation for their individual contributions during this time.

> They just need to know that people value what they're doing. They need to feel good about themselves. I hate the word 'pats on the back' [be]cause I think people just throw that word out. It's just little subtle things that you tell [teachers]…they need to know that what they're doing is good and that they're valuable to the organization. (Principal C, 95-100)

Principal C shared the importance of recognizing the staff through regular and intentionally planned efforts. Also, he reported encouraging teachers to find a balance between work and life. He often instructed them to leave the building after hours as a means of reassuring them that their work was sufficient. He explained the importance of addressing the emotional and affective needs of teachers, adding,

> [Little things matter] like just sitting in a meeting with them and laughing and

making it light-hearted. I feed them a lot…A LOT. We have…[a] quarterly [gathering that is] really big, and just other little things. And this isn't a fluffy campus. I'm a real direct person and I think I have people around me that are like that. So, I don't have people [on staff] that need a lot of those 'pats on the back.' They [work hard] because it's intrinsic, and I know that. What'll happen is they'll work themselves to death…so I preach balance. They need to be out of the building. They need to go home and be with their families and do things [outside of school]. (Principal C, 102-108)

Principals indicated their support of teachers involved expressing appreciation and highlighting successes. Additionally, they explained their communication with teachers is vital during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment.

Promoting open and transparent communication with teachers. According to principals, promoting two-way communication allows for better differentiation of district expectations. Principal C explained that he supported teachers by engaging in open and honest communication with them, in order to support flexibility in their teaching practice. However, he also shared that the ability to respond to teachers' needs may be based on their own years of administrative experience. Furthermore, principals also recognized that promoting close communication, although essential, may at times be difficult due to a principal's lack of experience. As he observed,

I've been doing this for a long, long time and I'm in a unique situation in that I'm at the end of my career, so I can do certain things that – and you do when you get older anyway. People when they're young are always worried about the boss and what people are thinking and all that kind of stuff. When teachers are talking

about assessing their kids and trying things and doing different things, I think principals need to give a professional's license to do certain things that they think may work. I'm not in that classroom every day and I'm not writing those lesson plans and I'm not practicing their profession like they are. Of course, I can go in and watch the kids and see what they are doing and I can tell what's going on, but I'm not actually up there doing it, and don't ask me to teach 5th grade math. I could do it, but I probably wouldn't be very good at it. So, for me to be specific about this subject area is not…I can be more specific about the pedagogical practice of it, so I think new principals or other principals, who may have issues with this or whatever, they just need to back-off and listen to their teachers. They can have a say. You set your goals and you have your where you want to be, and you look at your data and where you need to be. I think teachers know more than we give them credit for knowing. (133-147)

Principal C proudly asserted his willingness to deviate from traditional district rules as a response to his hardworking teachers. He adds,

So I practice balance, and they know that. They know if they leave at 3:15 in the afternoon, I'm not going to be watching them leave. I give them license to do things; I'm not a micro-manager if I don't have to be. If they're good, and they know their job, I leave them alone. That's all social stuff. That means a lot to them. I don't have a dress code, which I'm violating district policy, but that's just a big thing. They can wear jeans whenever they want and they always look professional, but it's those little things I think that people miss and they really appreciate that, and when they feel good about that stuff, they're going to perform

better. (108-115)

Principal C also added that he learned through experience to remain professional while defying the intensity and seriousness of communication associated with his position. He credits the ability to work in a light-hearted manner as a support to promote teacher collaboration and two-way communication of their ideas.

> A lot of good things come out of joking and laughter, I do know that and I never used to think that. I always thought 'we need to be serious about this,' but people are serious about it; they're just serious in a different way. It's kind of like working for Google or Apple or some of these places. These guys come in and they just sit around this big think tank and throw out ideas, and 99% of them never come to fruition but a couple of them will, but they sit around and enjoy each other's company and they get a lot done. I don't see why that has to be any different in education. You can make planning social. (150-157)

Principals are able to support teachers through their communication efforts, but an additional consideration is setting the optimal implementation pace of a new initiative.

Promoting a gradual implementation pace. According to principals, the process for teachers' learning involves considerations for deliberately building momentum with the implementation of student formative assessment to eventually reach the end goal of engaging teachers in all aspects of shared decision-making. Principals reported teachers' growth to shared ownership involved allowing their confidence to build through intentional small steps at the beginning of student formative assessment.

> At first I made the form very easy, I did; that was my way of easing them into it, building a little bit of momentum. They realized 'Hey, I can do that,' and then I

added a little bit more and a little bit more, and they haven't seemed to say anything but by the last one I was getting quite a bit of data out of it, and the discussion has improved so much from the beginning until now about what the data means. So that lets me know it was working, but it was slowly transitioning in and trying to clearly communicate what it is that our purpose is and what we're looking for. It lowered their anxiety too, [be]cause, at first they came in and said, 'What is she going to ask us?', and they really didn't have the answers at first. So now they know more about what is expected…I wish I had done…more of that early on. It would have been better as a teacher to explain, 'This is what a great one looks like', and I really didn't. I just let them evolve and figure out what benefitted the way they were going to teach, because they were the ones that were going to use it, and not just to turn it in to me. I guess just the format of explaining what I wanted. (Principal B, 127-141)

Principal B also noted that, although addressing technical needs was "easy", consideration of socialization need necessitated planning for more complex issues that might take more time. She added,

…It's really easy to explain technical needs, telling them what to teach – here's how to do it, here [are] all the ways [to do it]. The technical piece is easy to give it to them. The socializing takes relationships being built, and that's the complicated part; that's getting the right people together, the right leaders together. They're completely different pieces, but you have to balance both. Okay? (111-115)

She also explained that another form of support was allowing additional time to

initially ensure teacher "buy-in" or ownership to the new implementation(s).

> First, [the challenge is]…socialization and trying to get [teachers] to be *onboard* with [the initiative]. I think the first part is explaining why we're doing it, what's the purpose of it? You have to get them onboard with the overall view of why we're doing it before we do the assessments, but once they got that they found it very valuable. Giving them the support, giving them what they needed. In the first few years, it was just building that trust and a clear explanation of what was happening, I think. (Principal B, 120-125)

Principal B reported that long-term implementation success is more likely when planning takes into account affective concerns of those affected by the initiative. She further explained that principal's self-efficacy and enthusiasm may also contribute to sustainability. As she observed,

> I really think my enthusiasm about has so much to do with [gaining staff buy-in]. They know I love it. When data [analysis] starts, I get excited about it, so I don't know if my excitement and how to present it, 'Don't tell till you can sell' concept is the bottom line. I get excited, so when I presented it this year, cause it was all new, the CAs [Common Assessments] and our new way of formative[ly] assessing the students had changed, but I explained it's still what we're doing; it's regular assessments to guide instruction, change what we're doing. Is it working, is it not? I do think it's how you roll it out, how you present it to the teachers. (Principal B, 80-89)

Principal C also mentioned buy-in as a vital first consideration during the implementation of student formative assessment. He asserted that allowing time for

understanding "why" the implementation was important assisted with achieving teacher buy-in and long-term effectiveness. He added,

> …Getting them to buy-in to why we were doing this [formative assessment implementation]…[required] a lot of encouragement. Getting them to understand that what we're doing is good for kids, and then trying to make it non-tedious in your meetings. Making it more light-hearted and yet serious – firm but loving. The socialization aspect is getting teams that are cohesive and can work together. That's been difficult on several grade levels. (Principal C, 74-78)

Principal B noted that the apprehension with which some teachers view the new information might require additional time for principals to support teacher ownership.

> When we first started more of informative assessments, many teachers didn't even want to work on the computer part; they were very hesitant for any of it. They already felt like they knew where the kids were, but in fact they didn't. (Principal B, 48-51)

In an effort to assist teachers during times of hesitance, she observed,

> Ask them [the teachers], 'What do you need from me [the principal]? How can I make it *easier*? Can we come sit with you?' I did do it in small groups when we talked about 'Okay, now CA [Common Assessment] data is in our computer system, now what do we do with it.' (Principal B, 89-92)

In order to lessen the initial hesitation from teachers, one of the principals also explained that she supports staff by carefully pacing the innovation process, as opposed to issuing a blanket mandate for immediate compliance with new processes.

> So it worked for me but at first it was kind of strained in that, yes, they knew how

> to do it but to get them to love it and to do it took the time to see 'Okay, this does guide instruction; it makes the children do better' and there was faster improvement because of it. That's the actual part of taking ownership of it, so one parts easier and one part is much harder to get them on-board. (Principal B, 34-39)

Principal B also indicated working with experienced teachers may turn difficult and therefore effecting philosophical changes required by the new practices takes additional time. Further, she also acknowledged that to engage in the implementation processes related to the initiative, teachers need to be skillful in the use of classroom data.

> I think it's harder because some teachers have been teaching a long time and they think their ways have always worked. And that's what's hard, to be quite honest with you. Many very skillful teachers are doing so many evaluations informally, and they have gotten very accurate with their conclusions but they don't have any data to get the details. They can come to my RTI meetings with very general, broad statements, but when you really dig down the data actually speaks about the details that maybe they're not seeing. (Principal B, 41-47)

Although the communication and reassurance from the campus principal is a vital component to the successful implementation of student formative assessment, principals must also facilitate opportunities to work with their peers, who are also strong supports to their own learning needs.

Facilitating meaningful teacher-to-teacher interaction to improve student learning. All three principals reported that teachers themselves were an excellent source

of support for addressing their own socialization needs and the development of strategies to meet student needs. Therefore, principals are responsible for facilitating productive teacher-to-teacher interactions that might enhance the collective capacity of the school. Such interactions appear to include mutual classroom observations, collegial data-based conversations, exchange of professional wisdom, sharing of concerns and the like. District and campus plans outlined expectations for teacher data collaboration. As Principal A noted, "Our human resources are our greatest form of support" (116-119). She also indicated that she was able to create implementation structures that provide scheduled time for teachers to visit peers. She explained,

> …As friendly and social as the teachers tend to be, I think we teach in isolation. If teachers are sharing their good ideas and their experiences and if they're getting to see their colleagues working with students…I sometimes say that we're our own best resource to each other for professional growth and improving our practice. That would perhaps be a suggestion on this subject is to try to open up this school as much as possible so that teachers get a chance to visit other teachers' classrooms, not just to visit but also a chance then to reflect on what it is they have seen and any ideas they might carry with them. Principals then maybe provide the structure for what it is that the teachers are going in to look for and assist with processing through it. (Principal A, 68-76)

Principal C reported that promoting collaborative dialogue among teachers was a vital support he used to address the professional socialization needs of his teachers during the implementation of the formative assessment initiative.

> Whatever training they need, we'll try to provide anything because that all comes

> out of the meetings, that all comes out of them verbalizing that. The socialization is [the teachers] feeling comfortable with each other in the fact that they can make decisions and implement those decisions without having to ask the administrator if that's okay. If they want to experiment with something, and they think it's going to work, go for it. That goes into formative assessment by planning what they're going to do in the classroom and how they're going to assess all that. (Principal C, 123-129)

Principal B found success in facilitating meaningful teacher interaction. By asking teachers to lead small group sessions, she was able to encourage those who were resistant to understand the initiative related changes. She also reported that once teachers developed a clear understanding of the expectations, they were in a better position to communicate the vision to his/her peers. As she explained,

> As I see it, the socialization needs were met…unfortunately sometimes it takes time to get them to be. At first it's something new, why are we doing this, all the questioning, but once they saw the end results. Once they…unfortunately, which means it took time…but once you saw that the teachers who…I already had some teachers who were natural data people; they got right on it…they are my most effective teachers, so it wasn't very hard for people to follow suit with those people as leaders. So you had to have the right leaders in the small group sessions that we had, when we talked about what our purpose was, to step up and communicate clearly their understanding. So it actually was better to have it come from another teacher than to come from me, and as time went on I got to get my mission out to my leaders, my leadership team on my campus. (Principal B,

17-27)

Summary

This chapter presented the study context and the findings related to the perceived technical and professional socialization needs associated with the planning and implementation of student formative assessment. Additionally, this chapter presented a discussion regarding principal perceptions of the strategies used to meet teacher needs. Chapter Five will include summary of the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, and methodology. Additionally, a summary of the major findings and discussion will also be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

This chapter presents an overview of the study, a summary of the major findings, linkages to corresponding literature, implications for practice and future research, and concluding thoughts.

Re-Statement of the Problem

School district and campus leaders of the modern era are charged with the task of implementing effective, research-based instructional practices to improve student outcomes. Research supports the use of student formative assessment processes that are appropriate for the unique contexts of their campuses as a means of improving instruction and academic outcomes for students (Wiliam, 2011). When implementing research-based instructional practices, such as formative assessment, school leaders must do so with a strong consideration for the contextual, administrative, and sociological needs of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008; DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Delivering the administrative direction needed to attain high levels of student achievement by using formative data remains a relatively enigmatic and complex task (Jimerson, 2011; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2010). Teachers must expand their technical skills to ensure the effective use of data. Correspondingly, principals must have the leadership ability necessary to address the resultant socialization needs of their teachers, such as the potentially strong emotional responses to change and innovation (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heath & Heath, 2010). Consequently, school leaders must consider how to simultaneously address both the technical knowledge and socialization needs of teachers to engage in the implementation of campus-wide

formative assessment of students (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heath & Heath, 2010). In order to support this demand, there is a need to explore how principals successfully address and support both the technical needs and the professional socialization needs of teachers during the implementation of student formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heath & Heath, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

With the need to consider both capacity and emotional responses of teachers, the purpose of this study was to explore how school principals addressed *both* the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom to provide for the academic achievement of all learners (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Heath & Heath, 2010; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2010).

Research Questions

In order to determine school leadership considerations of the professional technical and socialization needs of teachers during the implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom, two research questions guided the study:

1. What do teachers perceive to be their technical and professional socialization needs experienced during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment and how are these met?
2. What are the school principals' perceptions of how they address the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment?

Overview of the Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was employed to explore principal perspectives regarding how to appropriately address the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment. Additionally, the researcher explored the self-perceived needs of teachers during such an implementation. Due to the subjective and personal nature of the research questions, a qualitative methodology was appropriate in this study. A multiple-site case study design was selected in order to obtain a broader range of experiences and to determine commonalities within multiple organizations with varied contexts and needs.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), confidence is gained when a researcher is able to derive findings from more than one source. Thus, the researcher selected three sources of data in order to ensure triangulated methods of data collection. Data sources for this study were interviews, focus groups, and a review of documents. The researcher also made theoretical notes and memos throughout the study. Data sources were further triangulated through the purposive selection of teachers and principals from 3 campuses within the same district. The data were analyzed following the qualitative research outlined by Yin (2011). Qualitative were sorted into categories developed through open, axial, and selective coding.

Summary of Major Findings

This study was conducted to determine the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers as they engage in formative student assessments to ensure student academic success. It also focused upon the principal's perceptions about how

they addressed teacher needs. The data revealed several specific teacher needs and strategies principals use to support teacher implementation of student formative assessment. The following is a summarized account of the main findings with connections to the relevant literature.

Teacher Perceptions of Technical and Socialization Needs

The prominent technical needs identified in this study were a campus-wide common terminology, participation in vertical teaming, and the maintenance of the support role of a campus instructional specialist. On the other hand, the professional socialization needs identified in this study included reassurance from the principal with new professional learning, a gradual pace of implementation for the formative assessment initiative, meaningful teacher-to-teacher interaction, open and transparent communication with the principal, and the ability to participate in building cohesive grade-level teams.

Technical needs. Three major technical need themes emerged through the focus group findings. These themes were associated with the acquisition of new skills and information.

Development of a campus-wide common terminology. The need to develop a campus-wide common terminology was highlighted by teachers as a challenge due to unknown terminology associated with the new state STAAR assessment. Technical definitions related to student formative assessment and new terminology also required consistency throughout each grade level. Strategies that encouraged collegial conversations, such as book studies, were found to be helpful in ensuring the same content terminology was used during the implementation of student formative assessment practices. This coincides with research by Wayman et al. (2011) who stated that a

common language of terminology facilitates effective implementation of student formative assessment processes.

Participation in vertical teams. Although teachers relied heavily on their grade-level peers to process new learning, vertical teacher conversations with all grade levels was identified as a need. This findings is aligned to strategies advanced by DuFour et al. (2010), who suggest that collective planning and sharing with all of the campus grade levels is a powerful means of building teacher capacity. Further, campus-wide student achievement is likely to improve as a result of vertical teaming opportunities that allow teachers to participate collective data analysis (DuFour et al., 2010). Although vertical teams supported the implementation of student formative assessment processes, instructional specialists were an instrumental resource used to support technical knowledge and skills related to implementation.

Maintenance of the support role of a campus instructional specialist. Support from instructional specialists who operated at a collegial level addressed an important teacher need. Campus instructional specialists are recognized as supporting teachers with common assessments, curriculum content, and student interventions (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Black & Wiliam, 2010,Wayman et. al, 2010). Further, according to Black & Wiliam (1998), teachers learn best from other teachers with comparable positions. The teachers were required to learn new technical skills, but this new learning also created a spectrum of professional socialization needs requiring support during the implementation of student formative assessment.

Professional socialization needs. While teachers experienced technical needs during student formative assessment implementation, their emotional responses to new

learning and collaboration are an important consideration during the implementation of student formative assessment (Heath & Heath, 2010). Teachers echoed this sentiment, suggesting that affective needs were satisfied by reassurance from the principal with new professional learning, a gradual pace of implementation for the student formative assessment initiative, meaningful teacher-to-teacher interactions, open and transparent communication with the teacher and opportunities to participate in building cohesive grade level teams.

Reassurance from the principal with new professional learning. Findings suggest that an important socialization need of teachers relates to encouragement from the campus principal. As teachers engage in the different stages of the implementation of student formative assessment, they experience anxiety, fear, and uncertainty related to the use of these new practices. Thus, the need for recognition of their efforts and assurance from the principal is evident. This is congruent with Black & Wiliam (1998) notion that affirming teachers' performance and contributions by principals help mitigate feelings of insecurity. In addition to addressing teacher frustration with new learning, the pace for implementation should also be taken into account.

A gradual pace of implementation for the formative assessment initiative. Since new learning takes practice to reach mastery, findings suggest that teachers prefer a slow pace for implementing the new processes. Teachers appreciate a progressive process with gradual steps to engage in the implementation of the initiative. Similarly, Black & Wiliam (1998) suggest that a deliberate implementation process considers teacher needs. In addition, Dufour & Fullan (2013) suggest efforts to soliciting teacher input and feedback may slow the implementation process, but these efforts are also likely to make

the initiative more sustainable. In addition to reassurance and a deliberate implementation pace, teachers also noted the importance of communication and collaboration with their peers.

Meaningful teacher-to-teacher interactions. Findings suggest that commitment to professional teacher-to-teacher interaction becomes essential to engage in student formative assessment. Such interaction does not only refer to teachers in their assigned grade level, but with other teachers through vertical teaming, as well. This is aligned with the PLC process, in which teachers demonstrate a willingness to serve as informal leaders and provide leadership to their peers (Copland, 2003). Although teachers noted the importance of meaningful interactions with one another, they also expressed a need for open and transparent communication with the principal.

Open and transparent communication with the principal. According to the findings, a need to communicate with the campus principal in order to clarify expectations and receive feedback on their efforts is evident. Further communication appears to also involve teacher feedback to the principal throughout the implementation process. This aligns with findings from DuFour & Fullan (2013) which support formative two-way communication processes as a way to limit potential problems by allowing teachers to share frustrations and concerns in a timely manner. Open communication between the teachers and principal also allows for ongoing refinements and guidance to help reach the collective vision during an implementation (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). Research also supports the effectiveness of teacher collaboration with the principal, especially when building cohesive grade-level teams.

Opportunities to participate in building cohesive grade-level teams. Findings

suggest that there is a need to match compatible teacher philosophies and teaching practice with the grade level teams in order to form cohesive grade level teams. This is congruent with professional learning communities which are dependent upon collaborative teachers with a focus upon learning (Hipp et al, 2008). In addition, according to the findings, teacher participation in the creation of a cohesive grade level team supports the need for teacher involvement in the hiring process of new teachers. Such involvement may contribute to overall campus compatibility, including personality and "fit" for a particular grade level.

Principals' Perceptions of How They Addressed the Technical and Professional Socialization Needs of Teachers

According to the findings, principals rely on specific strategies aimed at addressing teacher technical and socialization needs as they engage in the use of student formative assessment processes.

Technical Supports. Findings suggest that teachers required principals to address their needs for new learning, definitions, information, and skills. At least four themes emerged illustrating specific teacher supports used by the principal. These are as follows:

Facilitating vertical teaming. The findings in this study suggest that principals facilitate school-wide vertical teaming as a mechanism to support teacher technical needs. This is congruent with previous research which advances the notion that vertical teaming is an effective way to address the technical needs of teachers (DuFour et al., 2010). Further, facilitation of vertical teaming requires considerable time to establish norms and effectively support cross grade-level collaboration amongst teachers (DuFour et al.,

2010). While vertical teaming is an effective means of addressing the technical needs of teachers; findings also indicate that an additional source of support for classroom teachers is guidance from a non-evaluative peer.

Providing a campus instructional specialist. Campus instructional specialists played an important role in supporting both the technical and socialization needs of the classroom teachers. Campus instructional specialists have the capacity to address teacher needs for content delivery and student interventions. As Black & Wiliam (1998) suggest, teachers are the best resource for other teachers. Since peers face similar challenges, often, teachers seek assistance from one another to meet their students' needs.

Embedding time for collaborative professional development. Findings from the study indicate principals use intentional processes to support teacher development by embedding time needs based professional development and collaboration with peers. In alignment with the study's findings, Mindich & Leibermann (2012) agree with the need to create structures of time for teacher sharing and innovation. Copland (2003) also suggests the importance of finding non-traditional opportunities for teachers to discuss instructional improvement. As researchers suggest, by embedding professional development activities in the workday, principals provide for reciprocal accountability with expectations (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Setting clear expectations for implementation. According to findings, a critical component of principals support relates to clearly outlining expectations for implementation outcomes. As Wayman, et al. (2010) assert there is a need to align expectations throughout both campuses and districts. In addressing teachers' technical needs, Wayman, Jimerson et al. (2010) conclude that principals should confirm the

calibration of expectations regarding the use of data.

Socialization supports. Findings suggest that principal socialization supports are aimed at diminishing feelings of frustration, isolation and anxiety of teachers as they engaged in the implementation of student formative assessment. To this end, principals employ various campus specific strategies. These are as follows:

Facilitating the building of cohesive grade-level teams. Findings suggest that principals address teacher social needs by collaboratively constructing cohesive teams with input from teachers across grade levels. Teacher input enhances collaboration in creating a unified grade level teacher group which takes into account teachers' philosophies and personalities to be placed in cohesive teams. This is aligned with DuFour & Fullan's (2013) notion that teacher contributions to form grade level teams is essential. As its also noted, teacher input is important for collaborative professional learning communities (Dufour & Fullan, 2013).

Providing reassurance with new implementation. Findings indicate that social support from principal relates to reassuring teachers work and recognition of their contributions. By reassuring teachers through on-going feedback principals address the emotional reactions to the challenges of the implementation of student formative assessment this supports Heath & Heath (2010) notion that principals' support also includes intentional positive feedback and appreciation. Further, these findings are aligned with previous by Black & Wiliam (1998), in that principals must address teacher fears and anxiety associated with a change of practice. Since emotional responses are expected, principals also indicated the pacing should support minimizing potential negative outcomes.

Promoting open and transparent communication with teachers. The findings suggest that principals communicate openly and clearly with teachers through all implementation stages of student formative assessment. This communication involves teacher input and feedback associated with the initiative. According to Dufour & Fullan (2013) two-way communication is an essential element of transformational leadership. Further, it is suggested that communication is associated with formative communication which strengthens an implementation through continual dialogue (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Promoting a gradual implementation pace. Findings suggests that although teachers agreed with the expectations for student formative assessment, they desired a more moderate, deliberate pace to incorporate such a change into their practice. A progressive pace of implementation, according to the findings, tends to alleviate the challenges related to responding to the many newly adopted district mandates that were difficult for the teacher to incorporate at once. The literature indicates that an accelerated change of practice will inevitably involve hesitation from teachers (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Copland, 2003) and thus, suggests the need to slowly implement new information or strategies in collaboration with peers (Fullan, 2001; Heath & Heath, 2010).

Facilitating meaningful teacher-to-teacher interactions to improve student learning. According to the findings, principals support teacher professional socialization needs while addressing new concepts through facilitating sharing of information, insight, and concerns with each other by establishing specific campus-wide structures. Research supports the use of the structures similar to the professional learning communities such as peer to peer observation, data-based dialogue and information sharing (Mindich &

Leibermann, 2012; DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Grounded Theory Framework

Aligned with the concepts of Yin (2011), a theoretical framework was created by the researcher to depict the emerging themes from the study. Upon review of the findings associated to teachers' technical and socialization needs within the implementation of student formative assessment, a main core category emerged. This core category was defined as formative communication. Since classroom teachers and campus principals were the primary participants focus of this study communication includes various levels. For instance, principal to teacher, teacher-to-teacher, teacher to principal and both vertical and horizontal teacher teams.

Furthermore, using structures to communicate formative contextual individualized needs, requests for further development and on-going praise with reassurance related to the effective implementation of new learning are essential elements of distributive leadership (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). However, the vertical and horizontal open and transparent communication amongst teachers to meet expectations of formative assessment is also necessary to meet expectations of student formative assessment. Formative communication is necessary at all levels from the state to the classroom. However, certain factors may influence local implementation of student formative assessment. Therefore these should be taken into account in the development of a theoretical framework.

Influencing factors. The classroom is impacted by campus decisions, which stem from district interpretation and local implementation of state mandates. Each campus within the school district has contextual characteristics and organization ethos

including unique faculty and student populations. Thus, state mandates and expectations for student formative assessment should be tailored to campus specific needs and student outcomes. Therefore the emerging theoretical framework needs to be inclusive of the following:

State. Legislative educational mandates are communicated to local school districts.

District. The district interprets state and federal mandates to determine local requirements. The school district outlines instructional and student achievement requirements for campuses, which are often primarily communicated through the campus principal.

Campus. Each campus interprets district expectations for instruction and student achievement through a contextual lens, seeking distributed leadership among all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, staff, and the community. Formative two-way communication with the principal is expected to address teacher needs.

Classroom. The teacher interprets and applies personalized considerations to local instructional and student achievement mandates and seeks input from all stakeholders, including students, parents, grade-level teams, vertical teams, and the campus principal. Formative two-way communication with the principal is expected to address their needs on an ongoing basis.

The above components of the emerging framework are depicted in Figure 6.

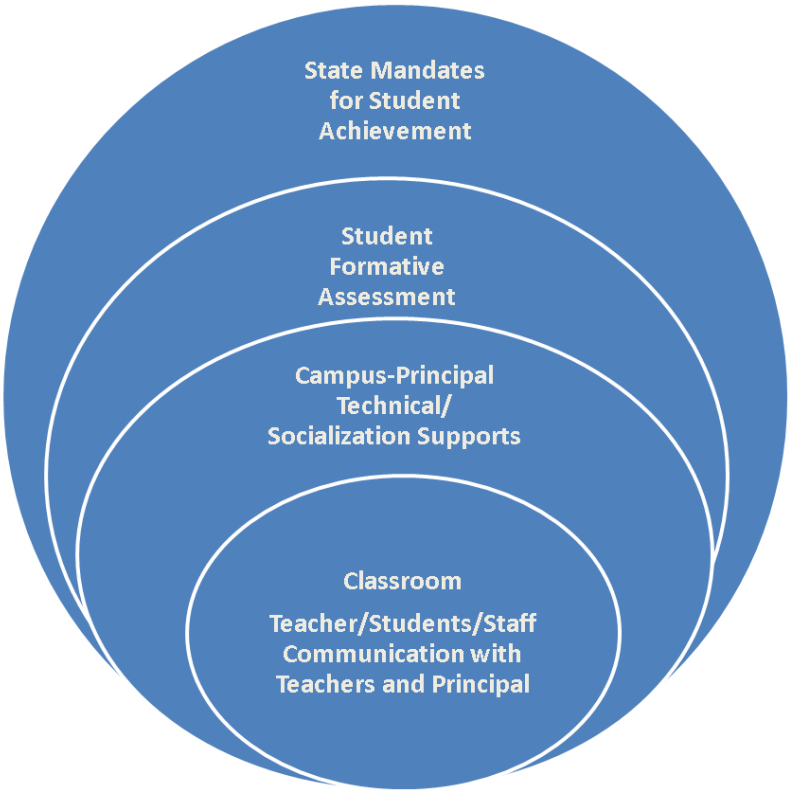

Figure 6. Theoretical Framework

In addition, implementing student formative assessment requires principal leadership at the campus level. This leadership is inclusive of Principal Expectations, Clarification of Accountability, Teacher Reassurance, Open and Transparent Communication, and Collaboratively Embedded Development Structures. As it can be observed in Figure 7.

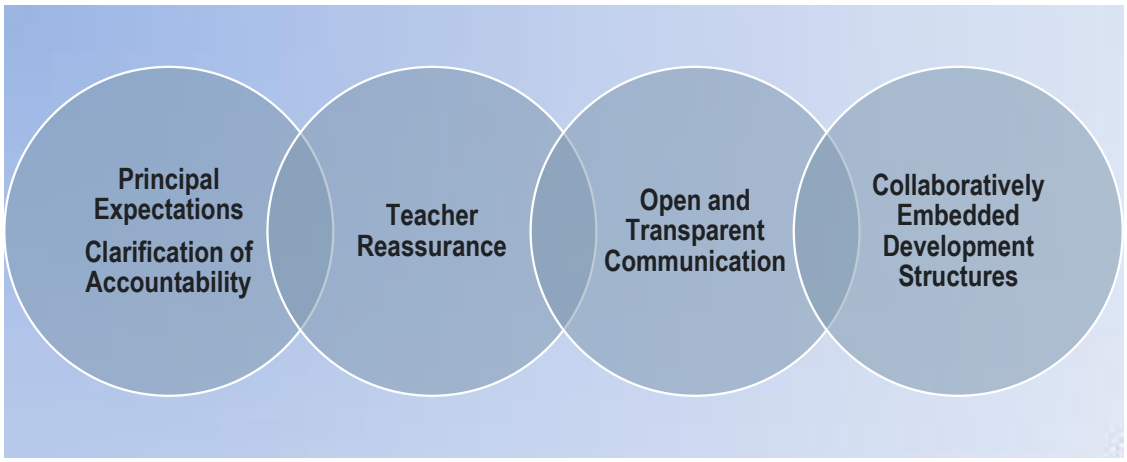

Figure 7. Principal Leadership

Study Implications

Based on the nature of this study, an emerging theoretical explanation related to the implementation of student formative assessment and implications were derived from the findings. These include implications for practice and future research.

Implications for Practice

Principals interested in successfully addressing new instructional expectations associated with state and district mandates, must possess skills that support both the professional technical and socialization needs of teachers during the implementation of student formative assessment. Furthermore, they may benefit from conducting a campus needs assessment and must be trained to support teachers. Additionally, principals must make an effort and enlist the necessary human resources and structures to create cohesive vertical teams in addition to grade level teams. Further, principals may be in a better position to minimize negative outcomes and potentially lessen campus needs by practicing open and transparent communication.

Implications for Future Research

This study might provide insight to the growing number of educators seeking to effectively provide for regular student diagnostic assessment. However, it is important to acknowledge that this study only focused on the professional needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment at the elementary campus level. It only included purposely selected principals and teachers representing third through fifth grade levels which are subject to state assessment mandates. Future research might include teachers needs at the middle and high school levels as well as a survey of all teachers at these campuses. Further research could also focus on principals' needs to effectively lead and support teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment. Additionally, others might examine district supports for campus principals during this implementation.

Concluding Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to explore principal and teacher perceptions of *both* the technical and professional socialization needs of teachers during the planning and implementation of student formative assessment in every classroom, a strategy that is increasingly used to support the academic achievement of all learners (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Heath & Heath, 2010; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Wiliam, 2010). The findings from this research determined teacher perceived needs and principal perceptions of how they addressed these needs during the implementation of student formative assessment. Overall, principals effectively addressed teacher needs, regardless of the unique contexts of their campuses and district. Additionally, there were principals who gave a stronger consideration to the technical needs than to the

professional socialization needs of teachers such as Principal A and B. There were some reported teacher needs that not all principals had considered.

There were common challenges that may have been due to the transition from a previously "loose" instructional leadership style, which has now shifted to a leadership mentality that emphasizes a much "tighter" adherence to research-based best practices (Young, 2006, p. 522). As districts are forced to respond to state mandates that directly influence campus and classroom expectations, open and transparent communication at all levels is a necessary component in the implementation of instructional best practices. Not only should successes be shared, but also struggles, failures, and needs. This dialogue should occur on an ongoing basis, perhaps beginning with each child, classroom, grade level, campus, and district. Principals should find ways to reassure teachers in order to bolster their confidence during such a new implementation. The principal's ability to adjust practices based on contextual needs appears to be vital. As socialization needs appeared to have outweighed technical needs in this study, school districts might consider establishing modes of open and transparent formative communication to meet the ongoing needs of the classroom, campus, principals, and district departments.

Every teacher participant was committed and passionate about professional learning, personalized student success, and the need to feel actualized within their profession. There was not one principal or teacher who did not agree with heightened expectations, new challenges, or district expectations. There was a concern for self-efficacy in meeting expectations from both the teachers and campus principals. This study cannot adequately express the level of dedication exuded by each participant.

During one of the busiest times of the year, the month of May, these participants willingly chose to participate to share experiences that might benefit and further public education. The passion from each teacher during the day STAAR scores were released cannot be adequately described. These teachers were highly professional, encouraging their peers while displaying disappointment with scores below 90%. If the profession continues to grow and retain teachers of this high caliber who are committed to instructional best-practices, education will continue to exceed any mandate or expectation for student growth. Likewise, principals were all equally concerned with being good instructional leaders. The principals all wanted to please their supervisors while supporting and building the capacity of teachers.

This research supports the notion that campuses are already engaged with the task of refining 21st century learning for both students and adults. With continued engagement in promoting best practices through collaborative efforts at the campus and district levels, needs of teachers are likely to diminish over time. However, considering the fluid nature of organizations and the value of investing in human capital, leaders should be compelled to consider the emerging needs of faculty to ensure the best possible education for *every* child.

Appendix A: Principal Interview Introduction, Ground Rules, and Questions

The researcher explains that the session will be recorded using a digital recorder, and the researcher will also take notes. [Recording begins.]

Researcher: [States time, date and name and title of interviewee. Reviews IRB Consent Form and has participant sign.] The purpose of this interview is to collect experienced professional technical and socialization teacher learning supports during the implementation of student formative assessment. Information shared in this interview will not be ascribed to any particular individual but will be identified only as "Principal A1, B1, C1" (campus indicated by letter). Please keep the following ground rules in mind:

- Speak from your own experience instead of speaking in generalities.
- Participate to your fullest ability. (Champion, 2007)

With these considerations, we begin our interview.

1. Please share your work experiences within education.
2. Please tell me about formative assessment practices in your campus.
3. Define what you believe the difference to be between professional technical and socialization teacher professional learning needs.
4. What were your teachers' professional technical needs during the first 3 years of the implementation of student formative assessment?
5. What were your teachers' professional socialization needs during the first 3 years of the implementation of student formative assessment?
6. How were the teacher professional technical and socialization needs met?
7. What suggestions would you give to principals to support professional

teacher technical learning support when they begin campus-wide student formative assessment?

8. What suggestions would you give to principals to support professional teacher socialization learning when they begin campus-wide student formative assessment?
9. What do you believe were your greatest teacher obstacle(s) within the professional technical and socialization supports from leadership?
10. What were/are the greatest teacher supports in these areas?
11. Would you like to add anything pertinent to our discussion today?

Note: The following probes may be used by the researcher if necessary (based on Krueger & Casey, as cited in Champion, 2007):

- Would you explain further?
- Would you give me an example of what you mean?
- Would you say more?
- Tell us more.
- Say more.
- Is there anything else?
- Please describe what you mean.
- I don’t understand.

Appendix B: Teacher Focus Group Introduction, Ground Rules, and Questions

The researcher explains that the session will be recorded using a digital recorder, and the researcher will also take notes. [Recording begins.]

Researcher: [States time, date & group type (i.e. teachers). Reviews IRB Consent Form and has participants sign.] The purpose of this interview is to collect experienced technical and social teacher professional learning supports during the implementation of student formative assessment. During our discussion, we need to keep the following ground rules in mind:

- Speak from your own experience instead of speaking in generalities.
- Participate to your fullest ability.
- Listen actively to other participants.
- Feel free to respectfully disagree with other participants, but refrain from personal attacks.

Information shared in this focus group will not be ascribed to any particular individual but will be identified only as "Teacher A1, B1, C1" (teachers numbered, campus indicated by letter). (Champion, 2007)

With these considerations, we begin our interview.

Tell me about formative assessment in your campus.

1. What strengths in formative assessment exist within your campus?
2. Define what you believe the difference to be between professional technical and socialization teacher learning needs.
3. What were your professional socialization needs during the first 3 years of

implementation of student formative assessment? How were these met?

4. What were your professional technical needs during the first 3 years of the implementation of student formative assessment? How were these met?
5. What suggestions would you give to principals for teacher professional technical learning support when they begin campus-wide student formative assessment?
6. What suggestions would you give to principals for professional teacher socialization learning support when they begin campus-wide student formative assessment?
7. What were/are your greatest obstacle(s)?
8. What were/are your greatest supports?
9. Would you like to add anything pertinent to our discussion today?

Note: The following probes may be used by the researcher if necessary (based on Krueger & Casey, as cited in Champion, 2007):

- Would you explain further?
- Would you give me an example of what you mean?
- Would you say more?
- Tell us more.
- Say more.
- Is there anything else?
- Please describe what you mean.
- I don't understand.

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VITA

Suzanne Martinez Villalpando, daughter of Ray and Camerina Martinez, was born and raised in Austin, Texas. She graduated from St. Michael's College Preparatory School in 1989. She earned her bachelor's degree in English Writing, Secondary Education from Saint Edward's University in 1993. Suzanne immediately began her educational career as a seventh grade Language Arts teacher, in the Dallas Independent School District the same year. Upon relocating to the Austin area, she taught at the Round Rock Opportunity Center as a sixth through twelfth grade English/Language Arts teacher. In 1999, she obtained her Master's degree from Texas State University in Educational Administration while continuing to teach and intern within the Round Rock ISD. Suzanne served as an elementary assistant principal in the Killeen ISD for one year. In 2000, she opened Hudson Bend Middle School in the Lake Travis ISD as the only assistant principal. She continued her career in Lake Travis as an elementary assistant principal, where she assisted in the closing of Lake Travis Elementary. Later, she served as the principal of the school during its reunification in a new building two years later. In 2008, she accepted a position in the Leander ISD serving as the inaugural principal for the "New Design" elementary campus where she continues to serve today. She was accepted into the University of Texas Cooperative Superintendency Program Cohort 22 during the summer of 2011.

Address: Susie_Villalpando@utexas.edu

The author typed this manuscript.